

HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL

THORPE HALL

February 2011



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Appendix A

Historic plans of gardens

I.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In October 2010, Beacon Planning were asked to advise Sue Ryder Care on the development of their long-term plans for Thorpe Hall, Peterborough, with the aspiration to improve the care facilities provided onsite at Thorpe Hall. They hope to achieve this by constructing a new care facility within the grounds, retaining the service wing, and finding an appropriate new use for the Hall. Accommodating modern care facilities within Thorpe Hall has been problematic for a number of years, but has recently become a matter of greater urgency through the imperative to meet modern building regulations.

1.2 The principle of constructing a new care facility within the grounds and subdividing the Hall into apartments has been discussed with Conservation Officers from Peterborough City Council and English Heritage earlier this year. English Heritage advised that the first stage in considering any new uses in certain areas of the site should be to prepare a Conservation Statement that could be used to inform future decision-making.

1.3 Following this advice, Beacon have been appointed to undertake an assessment of significance in heritage terms of the whole site in order to understand the relative importance of its different heritage components. While we have been in discussion with the appointed architects, this document has been written independently of any initial conclusions or favoured options. It will be used by the architects to inform the future development of any new buildings or alterations to the site.

1.4 This document seeks to provide this assessment in line with Central Government Planning Guidance contained within Policy HE6 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS 5). It is intended that this assessment will be shared with the relevant statutory authorities and amenity groups to form a basis of understanding of the value of the buildings and spaces which may be affected by any future proposals.

1.5 This document will be a 'living' document however which will be added to and expanded as any proposals develop. Ultimately it will be modified and used to support the planning / listed building consent applications should any proposals be taken forward.



2.0 STATUTORY CONSTRAINTS

2.1 The Property was Grade I listed on 07 February 1952. The list description reads as follows:

'Built by Peter Mills (1653-6) for Lord Chief Justice Oliver St John. Now a hospital (August 1970). 3 storeys, attics and basement. Symmetrical composition in ashlar, rusticated quoins. Square, groups of rusticated chimney shafts. North and south elevations are identical: 3 dormers, casements under [sic] pediments, centre one semi-circular. Stone slate roof overhangs on modillions. 7 windows, plain stone surrounds to top floor and ground floor. Porch with Tuscan [sic] columns supports a balcony. The balcony window on the 1st floor has a segmental pediment and shouldered architrave. The windows of bays 2 and 6 have pediments, while the other windows have frieze and moulded cornice. Band at 1st floor height. Flight of 8 steps with balustrade supporting 2 urns. Interior:- complete except for library panelling now at Leeds castle. Principal rooms have richly decorated fireplaces and plaster ceilings by Peter Mills. Principal staircase has heavily carved foliated open panels to broad balustrade. Stone screen on landing 1850 by Francis Riiddle [sic] of Peterborough.

2.2 A number of associated structures on the estate are also listed. Thorpe Hall and its ancillary buildings are also considered to have group value. The list descriptions are as follow:

2.3 Walls, gatepiers & entrance gates to Thorpe Hall, listed in Grade I in 1973:

'2 curved walls forming the entrance courtyard to the Hall and one composition with it. Carved entrance with stone eagle (sic) on overthrow.'

2.4 Former Stables to Thorpe Hall, listed in Grade I in 1952:

'Range to right of Thorpe Hall and one composition with it. 2 storeys and attics in stone with stone slate roof. Range of gabled dormers.'

2.5 Archway in garden of Thorpe Hall to the South West, listed in Grade II in 1973:

'A free-standing 5 part archway, in design resembling a Venetian window, sides and pedimented upper part having oval openings.'

2.6 Gateway from garden to stables of Thorpe Hall, listed in Grade I in 1952:

'Shouldered stone architrave flanked by vertically halved pilasters with volutes.'

2.7 Summerhouse in grounds of Thorpe Hall, listed in Grade II in 1973:

'Attractive late C19 summerhouse, octagonal, in red brick with fish scale slate roof.'

2.8 Lodge to Thorpe Hall, listed in Grade II in 1973:

'Late C19. 2 storeys in course rubble with ashlar quoins. Windows in plain stone architrave. Stone band between storeys. Hipped stone slate roof overhangs on modillion cornice. Stone and brick chimney.'

2.9 The associated parkland has been assessed by English Heritage and placed on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England in Grade II*. The register description is as follows:

'A country house, now in a city setting, surrounded by walled gardens and a small park dating from the mid C17, the gardens having Victorian additions.'

Historic Development

Thorpe Hall was built between 1650 and 1656 for Oliver St John, at which time the Hall outbuildings and gardens were all contained within a rectangular enclosure (Thorpe Hall Working Party report). The earliest known plan of these gardens dates from 1760 and shows a series of courtyards surrounding the Hall as well as a pattern of avenues radiating

out into the park from the garden walls. Frances St John, the last of the family, died in 1789 and the estate, having reverted to the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough Cathedral, was then sold to the Fitzwilliam family (of neighbouring Milton Park, qv). The 1789 sale catalogue and inventory record show that the formal nature of the gardens had altered little but that the park had become more informal with the removal of some of the avenues. The Hall was occupied by tenants until 1850 when it was purchased by the Rev William Strong. Strong was responsible for the next phase of developments, which are recorded in a series of journals he kept of the work to the gardens, partly carried out within the C17 framework (Northamptonshire RO). He extended the walled garden to the west to create a large kitchen garden. The gardens changed little until 1947 when the Hall became a hospital, although some modifications were undertaken by the Meaker family who purchased the estate in 1927. After 1947 the gardens became neglected but (late C20) have become the subject of a major restoration plan, following the purchase of the Hall by the Sue Ryder Foundation in the late 1980s and the formation of the Thorpe Hall Gardens Working Party. The site remains (1999) in institutional use.

Description

Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform, Setting

Thorpe Hall lies in the district of Longthorpe on the north-west side of the city of Peterborough, beyond the north-west bank of the River Nene and Thorpe Meadows. The site covers an area of c 26ha bounded to the south-east by the A1179 (Longthorpe Parkway), to the north-east and north-west by Thorpe Road, and to the south-west by housing. The Hall occupies an elevated position with views out to the north, east and south.

Entrances And Approaches

Thorpe Hall is approached via a straight drive off Thorpe Road to the north (lodge no longer survives) which leads to the walled entrance court below the north front. A second, service drive leads from a stone-built lodge c 300m further to the south-west on Thorpe Road, c 150m to the west of the Hall. It provides [sic] access to the stables and domestic wing on

the west front. A further drive can still be seen leading off the main drive eastwards towards the city, the lodge and entrance to the road which accompanied it having been removed on the construction of Longthorpe Parkway (late C20). The surviving lodge, together with the demolished north and east lodges, were built in the 1850s by the Rev Strong who reused materials from an old barn which he demolished to make way for a new kitchen garden, to construct the west lodge.

Principal Building

Thorpe Hall (listed grade I) is a square, three-storey country house built in the Classical Mannerist style of stone under a hipped tile roof. It was designed by Peter Mills for Chief Justice Oliver St John and constructed between 1653 and 1666. The seven-bay symmetrical entrance front faces north, whilst the garden front looks east and comprises three bays facing onto a raised, stone balustraded [sic] terrace.

Gardens And Pleasure Grounds

The Hall stands within a rectangle of gardens, the whole being enclosed by a high stone wall contemporary with the house, its four corners surmounted by large stone urns. The wall was built with two entrance courts, one to the north and the other to the south, only the former of which remains. The wall is broken on all four sides by carriage gateways, those to the north, south and east being of elaborate design, while that to the west is simpler, its piers being finished by stone balls. To either side of the north gateway are pedestrian doorways with C18 iron grilles.

The main garden area lies below the east front. Steps lead down from a balustrade terrace next to the Hall to a parterre of stone-edged beds laid out in the 1850s. Along the walls of the north and south sides of this area are raised walks, that to the north being treated as an informal shrubbery walk, that to the south being a broad gravelled path. In the south-east corner of the garden, set into the east wall, is an C18 stone summerhouse. This marks the eastern end of an axis established in the 1850s which runs east/west across the gardens south of the Hall. An arch saved from the old south wing's central doorway was placed

to form the continuation of a line with the gateways in the east and west walls of the then new kitchen garden. The entrance to the west kitchen garden wall is an earlier feature and originally stood to the west of what is now the south entrance to the kitchen garden.

When the site was first laid out there was a walled court beneath the south front of the Hall, the lines of which have been picked up in the newly planted (late C20) hornbeam hedges. The garden to the west of this is laid to lawn with specimen trees, but originally contained a simple parterre bounded on its western edge by the stable yard (Thorpe Hall Working Party report). Both the walls of the court and the stables had been demolished by the 1850s.

South-west of the Hall, partly on the site of the stables, is the Victorian Children's Garden, previously a swimming pool, now (1999) a rose garden, laid out around an oval pool. The brick summerhouse in the south-east corner was brought from Stanground Manor in the 1850s.

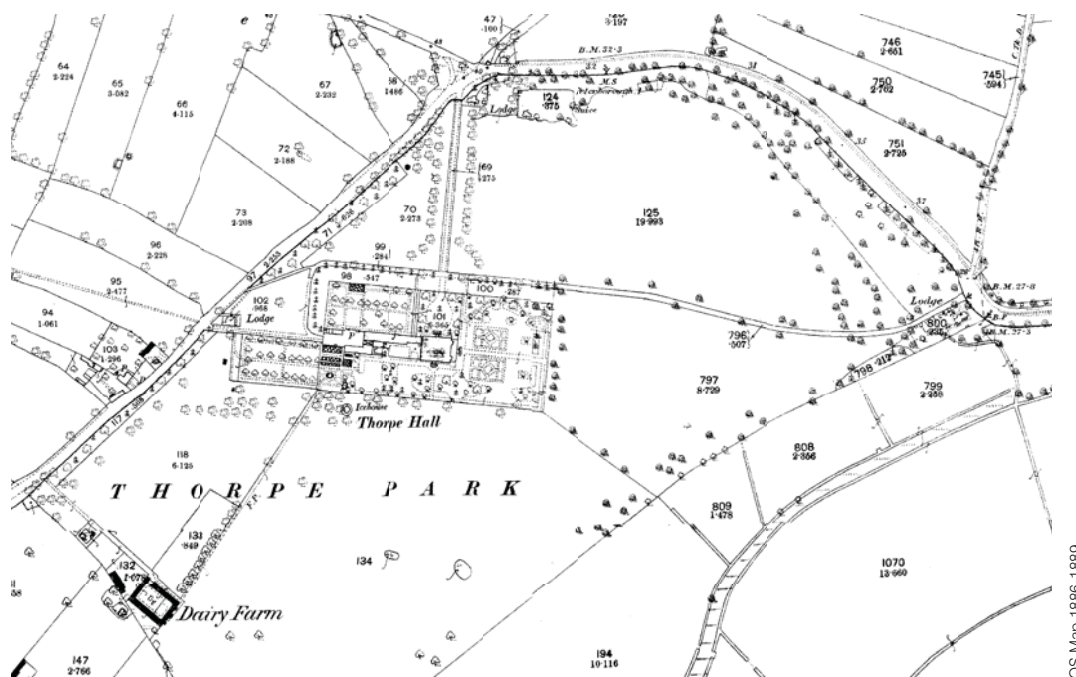
Park

The Hall and walled gardens are set in a small park, level to the north and sloping away to the south and east. Of the C17 avenues which radiated from the centres of the north, south and west garden walls, only traces of the lime avenue to the north survive. In the south-west corner of the park are the Holywell Ponds, a complex of fishponds dug to accompany the medieval manor house (no longer standing) and later incorporated as a feature into the C17 park.

Kitchen Garden

The kitchen garden lies beyond the rose garden c 100m to the west of the Hall. The walls, built in the 1850s, are stone, faced with brick. To the north of the service wing, within the mid C17 walls, is an area of orchard. Originally this was two garden divisions but these had been amalgamated into one for use as a productive ground by the 1820s (Thorpe Hall Working Party report). In the 1850s a secondary wall to the west was put up to separate off the servants' entrance from this enclosure.'

2.10 Thorpe Hall is situated within the Longthorpe Conservation Area, designated in June 1969. The Conservation Area does not have an appraisal.



3.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

3.1 Thorpe Hall is located within the parish of Longthorpe to the west of Peterborough. It is notable not only for Thorpe Hall but also for Longthorpe Tower, a C14 tower with a remarkably complete set of domestic medieval wall paintings.

3.2 Historically, Longthorpe was under the jurisdiction of the Soke of Peterborough, along with approximately 30 other parishes. Today it is administered by the unitary authority of the City of Peterborough and is located within the ceremonial county of Cambridgeshire.

3.3 Thorpe Hall is to the northeast of the village of Longthorpe and neighbours the large estate of Milton Hall, built earlier at the end of the C16 for the Earl of Fitzwilliam and now Grade I Listed. The extensive garden was landscaped in 1791 by Humphry Repton and the garden and parkland is included on the Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II*

3.4 The first edition 1886-1889 OS map shows Thorpe Hall in its rural setting. Originally the estates of Milton and Thorpe Hall were separated by agricultural land and the small village of Longthorpe. Today much of the intervening land is occupied by housing (in the enlarged village of Longthorpe and the 'township' of South Bretton) the Nene Parkway and realigned route of the A47.

3.5 The 1901 OS Map depicts relatively little change with Thorpe Hall still enveloped by a predominantly rural hinterland. This continued into the first quarter of the C20, at which time some new development extended westwards from Peterborough but little took place within the immediate vicinity of Thorpe Hall.

3.6 This had changed however by 1938, by which time Thorpe Park Road has been laid out on the line of an existing route way, thereby improving access from the west of the city centre and

encouraging residential development towards Thorpe Hall. Thorpe Avenue on the north west of the estate had similarly appeared, beginning the suburbanisation of this area.

3.7 By 1985, the area had changed dramatically as the new town of Peterborough was replanned by the Development Corporation to accommodate overspill from London. This initiated major new infrastructure, as well as new townships. The 1985 OS Map shows the impacts of these new roads, one of which runs to the south of Thorpe Hall (Longthorpe Parkway) and severs its connection to the River Nene. The estate by 1985 had become enclosed on all four sides with either significant road infrastructure or residential development. The village of Longthorpe expanded substantially and was effectively absorbed into the City.

3.8 By 1992, development had encroached into the immediate grounds of Thorpe Hall. A large computer centre constructed in the early 1980s to the southwest of the Hall has affected the setting of Thorpe Hall to the southwest and caused the loss and fragmentation of this part of its associated historic landscape.

4.0 THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE HOUSE AND GARDENS

4.1 The Manor of Thorpe Hall is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. This manor house was part of the land holding of the Benedictine monastery in Peterborough, and at the Reformation was unusually transferred to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral as opposed to the normal practice of transferring confiscated lands to supporters of the crown.

4.2 The Dean and Chapter leased the Old Manor to a Matthew Robinson in 1641, a loyal follower of King Charles I. As the Parliamentarians came to power, the Old Manor was confiscated once again, and purchased by William Cervington. By 1649 the Old Manor was in the possession of Oliver St John, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, who was to commission the existing Hall and landscape.

4.3 St John, educated at Trinity College Cambridge and admitted to the Bar in 1626, won a seat in Parliament in 1640 as a member for Totnes and later became Solicitor General to King Charles I. St John was however a reformist and strong supporter of the Parliamentarians. He was related to Oliver Cromwell whose cousin Elizabeth he married in 1638. He was appointed under Cromwell to the position of Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.

4.4 During the Commonwealth, between 1653 and 1656 St John began to build his family seat at Thorpe. The construction was funded in part by his involvement in the 'Order of the Company of Adventurers to the Bahamas', but he is also alleged to have made money through confiscated Royalist property and selling pardons to disgraced Royalists.

4.5 The classical features of the Hall had long led architectural historians to believe that the Hall was designed by John Webb. It was not until the 1950s that Howard Colvin demonstrated that Peter Mills is more likely to have been responsible, which has since become the prevailing opinion.

4.6 Peter Mills was firstly a bricklayer, appointed in 1643 as Bricklayer to the City of London and Master of his Company between 1649 and 1650 and again between 1659 and 1660. He was appointed to survey the City of London following the Great Fire, along with Christopher Wren and other important contemporaries. Despite his role in rebuilding London, very few buildings can be positively attributed to him. He is one of a number of architects including Inigo Jones, John Webb and Nicholas Stone to have been linked to Lindsey House, built c.1640 in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It has since been listed in Grade I and is described by Sir John Summerson as 'perhaps, historically, the most important single house in London' (p. 151). The Hitcham Building at Pembroke College, Cambridge, of 1659 has been firmly attributed to Mills and is included within the Grade I listing of the main College buildings. Other buildings attributed to Mills include the central block to Cobham Hall, Kent, built between 1662 and 1672 and listed in Grade I; Balls Park, Hertfordshire, listed in Grade I; the West Wing of Thorney Abbey, Peterborough, listed in Grade I; and the Manor House in Poulton, Gloucestershire, also listed in Grade I (this has also been linked to John Paget). Close comparisons between Thorpe Hall and Grade I listed Lees Court, Kent, has led some to speculate that Mills might have been the architect. It is also generally considered that Mills designed Wisbech Castle, now demolished, due to close architectural similarities with Thorpe Hall.

4.7 Thorpe Hall is an expression of the style now commonly referred to as 'Artisan Mannerism'. This was a style favoured by some of the leading architects of the C17, drawing influence not so much from the work of Jones but instead from Italy and France directly. Summerson describes this style as chiefly that derived from the finest London craftsmen, who were influenced by contemporary Mannerist influences seen in France and the Netherlands (p.142). The master craftsmen of the City of London were leaders in their fields and were the principal proponents of this style, among whom Mills can be counted. Thorpe Hall with its exuberant internal plasterwork, joinery and stonework certainly showcases the artisan's craft, which Summerson suggests is to the detriment of architectural discipline.

4.8 This is not to say however that the influence of both Palladian ideals and Jones was not felt at Thorpe Hall. Its exterior has many classical features, with pediments to the windows, columns and pilasters. Thorpe Hall is a 'double pile' house, with a roughly square plan and is three storeys plus attics over a vaulted basement. This was a break from the tradition of courtyard

plans that dominated Elizabethan and Jacobean houses, with mid-C17 houses instead taking a much more compact form. The double-pile arrangement was most likely introduced by Jones who employed it in an early form at Queen's House, Greenwich. Built in Ketton stone, the north and south elevations at Thorpe Hall are almost identical and the Hall can be characterised by its strong sense of symmetry. The hipped roof, solid chimney shafts and cornice clearly demonstrate the shift towards the horizontal emphasis that marked such a decisive change from the elaborate roofscapes of houses of the C16 and early C17.

4.9 Inside fine C17 interiors survive, including the original principal staircase, moulded ceilings and panelling. The ground floor has an impressive range of rooms with particularly decorative panelling and plaster ceilings surviving in some of the rooms. The first floor rooms are of a similar high quality, with some surviving plaster ceilings, as well as original fireplaces and decorative doorcases, some of which are topped by original painted friezes which were revealed during the 1980s restoration work. The third floor is noteworthy for an impressive spiral staircase that gave access to the viewing cupola (which has since been removed).

4.10 To the west of the Hall is a contemporary service wing of two storeys with attics built in a matching style and with centrally placed 'Holborn' gables (as described by Summerson) on the north and south elevations. This was connected to the Hall in the C18 by a two storey link building that was later extended southwards in the C19. The service wing shows the influence of trends first seen in London with the use of the scrolled 'Holborn' or Dutch gable which became very popular through the 1630s and 1640s and is typical of the artisan style.

4.11 Built at a time of transition, the plan form of Thorpe Hall appears to combine both the Italianate plan with vestiges of the medieval. The 'double pile' arrangement, first seen in England in the C17 allowed the medieval system of rooms opening out from one another to be replaced by a central spine corridor as seen at Thorpe. This typically came to be accompanied by a symmetrical arrangement whereby the principal rooms were symbolically located in the centre of the house. Thorpe Hall however does not follow this arrangement, with instead the Hall and Great Chamber located in the eastern side with its bay windows. On entering the house, the visitor did not enter a central hall as came to be the norm but rather a 'screens passage' that has been described by Summerson as 'obsolescent', and does indeed hark back to the traditional medieval plan.

Opposite this on the western side, a doorway gave entry to a Servants' Hall which in turn gave access to the kitchen in the service wing beyond.

4.12 Despite this typically medieval arrangement with the Hall, screens passage and service areas, other areas of the Hall conform to C17 fashions. The Servants' Hall [G5] to the west of the Hall [G1] is thought from archaeological investigations to have originally been one single volume. The wainscot of the Servants' Hall is similar but a simplified version of that in the Hall opposite, suggesting that the two rooms functioned as a pair. This reflects the growing C17 tradition of increasing privacy of the family from the rest of the household. The family, retainers and guests would have dined in ceremony in the hall, and the servants would have eaten separately in the servants' hall opposite. This was a clear break from the Elizabethan/Jacobean practice whereby the whole household dined together.

4.13 The introduction of a servants' hall reflects the changing attitudes that in part governed plan form over the course of the C17 during which the status of the servants within the household was eroded, accompanied by an according desire for all such service functions of the house to be hidden from view. The idea of 'the backstairs' began to appear in the first half of the C17, but it was not until 1660 that Sir Roger Pratt formalised the principles following his use of them at Coleshill (c.1650). Through the C16, servants had been part of the household and were often drawn from families of status themselves. By the end of the C17 however, plan form was designed to keep servants from sight. The beginnings of this can be seen in Thorpe Hall with the use of closets, a single set of back stairs and large servants' hall. However the arrangement that came to dominate, with multiple backstairs serving individual bedchambers, was not fully realised.

4.14 It is interesting at this point to offer a comparison of Thorpe Hall with Coleshill. The exact date for Coleshill is unknown, but it is thought to have been built over the 1650s and completed in the early 1660s, making it a contemporary of Thorpe Hall. Coleshill realises in a fuller way some of the ideas that are seen only in a primitive form in Thorpe Hall. In contrast to Thorpe Hall, the plan form at Coleshill was far more progressive. The medieval screens passage arrangement was abandoned and instead the house was entered via a central hall with staircase. The servants were relegated to a servants' hall in the basement. This division of the family from the servants

was consolidated by the arrangement of the bedchambers which each had a separate closet and servant's room serviced by its own adjoining back staircase.

4.15 In other respects, Thorpe Hall demonstrated the height of mid-C17 fashion. This is demonstrated particularly in the arrangement of the apartments on the south side of the ground floor and first floor which become increasingly private and were used according to the status of the guest. The Great Chamber [F1] for instance, with the Withdrawing Room [F2] and adjoining Bedchamber [F3] illustrates well how such suites operated, becoming increasingly private as you move through the suite of rooms. The centrally placed doors to each of the rooms allowed views through the suite, thereby clearly displaying the hierarchy of spaces to all visitors.

4.16 The plan form of the ground floor remains largely unchanged from its C17 construction. In the northeast corner was the Hall [G1]. To the south, beyond the staircase hall containing a fine C17 principal stair (later reconfigured), was the Parlour [G2], later used as a Library in the C20. Opposite the Great Parlour to the west, across the passageway that runs north-south through the centre of the house, was the Ante-room [G3], adjacent to which was the Little Parlour where St John would have received his guests privately [G4]. In the northwest corner, in the location of the lift shaft and 1980s staircase, was the Servants' Hall [G5]. Between the Little Parlour and Servants' Hall in the western passageway was the single back staircase, originally located on the southern side but moved to its current position in the C19.

4.17 At first floor, above the Hall was the Great Chamber [F1], with the Withdrawing Room located adjacent to the west [F2], and the state bedroom in the northwest corner [F3]. On the southern side, in each corner was a bedroom [F4, F5] with an adjacent closet [F6, F7]. The bedroom in the southeast corner has been hypothesised to have been the intended state bedroom, but the relationship between the Great Chamber, Withdrawing Room and northwest bedroom would suggest that this was in fact the highest status bedchamber. In the centre was the Banqueting Room [F8].

4.18 At second floor was a suite of bedrooms, some with adjoining closets [S6, S9]. These were possibly intended for use by St John's children. The family staircase rises up from the central gallery to the second and third floors. The single back stair case continues up to this floor.

4.19 As originally built, the Service Wing was an entirely separate building and was only linked to the Hall in the C18. The original plan form of the service areas has been altered over the ages, most substantially it seems in the C19 and C20. The main kitchen was originally the full size of G6 and G7 combined and must have been an impressive space with its double height vaulted ceiling. To the west – now the doorway – at first floor level was a viewing platform thought to have been for the steward to oversee the kitchen. The moulded C17 surround to the opening survives. The partitions to the west are largely C19 insertions, and further west again G9 and G10 were originally the bakehouse as evidenced by the C17 fireplaces. The N-S passage was originally wider than its current C19 form. Opposing doorways were located in the fourth bays from the west and later blocked in the C18.

4.20 In the mid-C19 a plan of the house was made prior to a programme of restoration. Undertaken by A.W. Hakewill, this document provides a useful record of the earlier plan form of the house and outbuildings. It shows clearly the South wing which extended south from the stable courtyard. This survived until the mid-C19 but was then demolished. It may have been one of the outbuildings described by Hakewill to have been in a poor condition from neglect. There is very little evidence for the external or internal form of this wing, or indeed its first date of construction. The archway in the garden was originally part of the wing and provides the best evidence for its appearance, although this was rebuilt in the 1990s in its current location and form.

4.21 Thorpe Hall survives as a rare example of a house from the Commonwealth period surrounded by its formal gardens and wider parkland. With the exception of the loss of part of the parkland to a new computer centre building in the 1980s, the rest of the hall's setting remains remarkably intact – particularly considering the proximity to central Peterborough and the suburban expansion of the city throughout the C20. The importance of the garden is reflected in its Grade II* status on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens.

4.22 The house and all its outbuildings were contained within a rigid rectangular enclosure with gatepiers, niches and other decorative features reflecting the mannerist detail of the hall itself. Typically of the period, formalised views out over the wider parkland and countryside beyond were provided from a terrace in the east garden and also from the belvedere tower on the roof of the house itself. Avenues ran from the centres of the north, south and west sides of this enclosure.

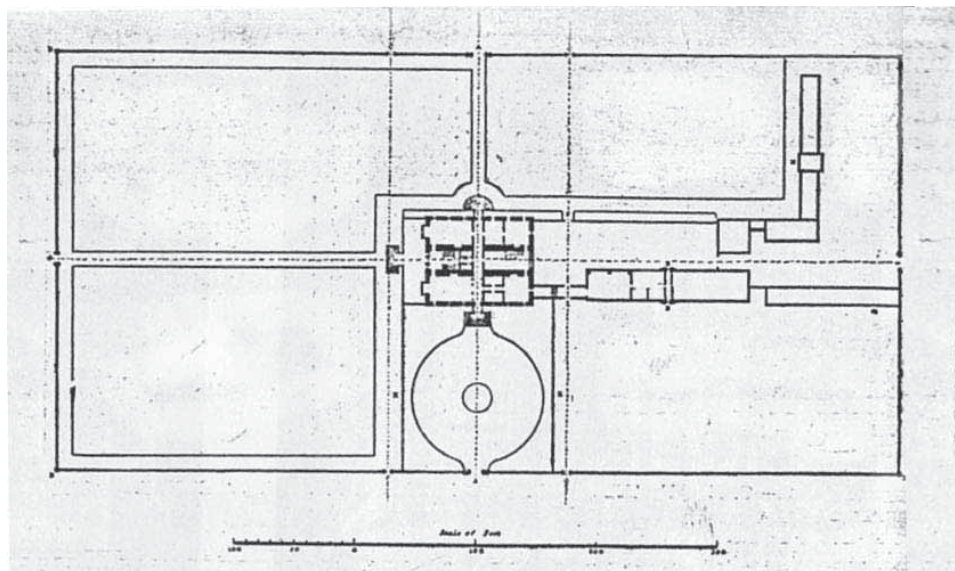
The drive to the south ran in a rough diagonal towards the Manor House whilst those to the north and west linked to what is now Thorpe Road.

4.23 The main garden was to the east and was apparently a symmetrical arrangement of four gardens divided by crossing paths and with statues in the middle of each garden and at the intersection of the paths (so that the statues were arranged like the five spots on a dice). Further, separate, courts and gardens to the north (three enclosures) and to the south (two enclosures) were shown whilst the south-west portion of the rectangle was occupied by the house's south wing and to the west of this was a service wing. When built, the house had a central cupola which acted as a belvedere giving views over the surrounding countryside.

4.24 No plans of the gardens survive before 1760, but it seems likely that few changes had been made in the first century of the house's existence. The house remained in the St John family until it was put up for sale in 1789 on the death of Sir Robert Bernard, the last heir of the St John family. An inventory, plan and sales particulars from this date give a good insight into the design of the garden at this time. A number of courts are listed together with twelve iron bowls and a garden house, various marble busts and lead statues. Five marble statues (possibly from the east garden) are also mentioned including two 'academical figures' and Hector and Andromache. Apparently by the time of the sale the cupola had 'been took down from the top of the house some years ago'.

4.25 The main east garden appears similar to that originally laid out although the raised terrace appears to have been used for playing bowls. What were formerly two courts to the south of the house were now combined. The three northern courts remain; the western one with a circular feature with trees marked, the almost square central one with trees on its south, east and west boundaries and the eastern one which was immediately in front of the north elevation of the house.

4.26 Outside the formal gardens, various alterations had been made within the parkland. These included the removal of the southern drive together with a considerable thickening of the tree belt to the west of the south gate. A diagonal route linking the drive along the north wall to the western access has been created and a barn is indicated along the western drive.



Hakewill Plan – Extract from 'Country Life' 46, (13 Sept. 1919), p. 306

4.27 The plan form of the house appears to have remained fairly static through the C18, with room functions changing but not a great deal of alteration to either the plan or its external appearance. The subdivisions in the eastern third of the Servants' Hall as shown on Hakewill's plan are thought to have been inserted sometime in the C18, reducing the size of the Servants' Hall and creating two smaller rooms either side of a central passage. At the time of the 1789 inventory, one of these rooms was used as a plate store. The link building was added which joined the Hall to the Service wing, and at one time accommodated a Housekeeper's Room with dressing rooms above.

4.28 Thorpe Hall was leased for a period by the Fitzwilliam family, owners of Milton Hall to the west, and was eventually bought in 1810. The estate land was amalgamated with that of Milton Hall and Thorpe Hall itself was little used until 1850 when the 3rd Earl Fitzwilliam sold the house and 70 acres of park to the Reverend William Strong, Chaplain-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria, for £8000 with an additional £667 paid for the timber on the estate.

4.29 Rev. Strong bought a house that was in a serious state of disrepair having been tenantless for a number of years, and consequently embarked on a programme of restoration. The C19 therefore appears to have been a period of substantial change within the Hall, and most particularly in the Service Wing. As already noted, before undertaking these changes he employed Hakewill to survey parts of the estate, and also made detailed notes of the works within 'Journals' compiled at the time. Hakewill stated that 'the building was for the most part in sound condition – and this after exposure to the inclemency of 200 winters, yet the interior, and the adjacent buildings were in a dilapidated state and the whole scene wore a desolate aspect', quoted in 'Country Life' 46, (13 Sept. 1919), p. 332. Unlike other 'restorations' of the period however, fortunately much of the original fabric survives and Strong was relatively sympathetic to the original features.

4.30 Within the Hall, Strong reconfigured the principal staircase to add an additional flight to join to the central landing. Strong also relocated the ground floor columns that originally formed the screen to the Hall, moving them to their current position in the crossing of the east-west and north-south passages. Strong further altered the Servants' Hall to form a Butler's Pantry, and added a doorway through into the west passage.

4.31 The functions of the rooms similarly altered in the C19 from their C17 and C18 uses. In the C19, the Hall [G1] was used as a dining room, with the Ante-room [G3] used as a breakfast room. In the C18, this room was used as a drawing room and the panelling dates to this period. The Parlour [G2], retained this function. At first floor, the Great Chamber [F1], which had become the saloon in the C18, was used in the C19 as a drawing room and the Withdrawing Room to the west [F2] was used by Mrs Strong as a drawing room. The Banqueting Room [F8] was converted to a bedroom in the C18, and used in the C19 as a school room. The bedrooms in the southeast and southwest corners remained as bedrooms through the centuries, with the adjacent closets used in the C19 as dressing rooms.

4.32 In the Service Wing, the plan form was substantially altered to accommodate changing functions and services. The kitchen was subdivided to form two kitchens [G6 and G7] and a baking oven was inserted in the back kitchen [G7]. The kitchen offices are largely formed from C19 partitions and a stone stair was inserted in the northern end of the passage to give access to first floor level (later removed in the 1980s). The original bakehouse to the west of the passage was similarly subdivided. In the C19, the westernmost end of the wing was converted into a coach house with a large opening created in the external western wall to provide access. The entire first floor of the service wing was used in the C19 as the laundry. A floor was inserted into the main kitchen to make space for an ironing room.

4.33 In the gardens, at this time the wall dividing the south and east gardens was removed and the terraces modified with the central steps removed and replaced by new steps at the east and west ends. The north terrace was modified to produce a serpentine path through a 'wilderness' of trees and shrubs whilst that to the south was regraded to form a continuous walk. More elaborate parterres were formed adjacent to the house with 'American' gardens to the east.

4.34 The south wing had been demolished but its original centrepiece was retained as a garden feature on axis with a pavilion against the east wall. To the west of the centrepiece a children's garden was created which had an oval plunge pool, radiating paths and a summer house. Beyond this a large new kitchen garden stretching down to Thorpe Road was created.

4.35 The diagonal west track was removed and replaced by a track running parallel with the west main garden wall. The formation of the large kitchen garden (which included various glass houses) had necessitated the demolition of the barn, the materials of which may have been used for the new lodge built at the western entrance from Thorpe Road.

4.36 The north-western gardens were combined to provide kitchen / fruit gardens, the circular western feature being shown removed. A hot house appears to have stood against the north wall and there were other conservatories and cold frames probably adjacent to the south wall. The direct entrance into the west wing flanked by walls to the north and north-west gardens was formed by Strong: the latter wall being stone faced on the entrance side but of brick in its garden elevation.

4.37 Strong planted hundreds of mostly evergreen trees throughout the gardens and parkland and especially along Thorpe Road. Many were brought from Stanground Manor, his previous house. New lodges were provided at the west, north and east (where two were provided) entrances whilst strong repaired the various walls and lead fountains.

4.38 In 1866, the estate passed to Charles Isham, son of William Strong on his death. It then passed to Charles Isham's elder son in 1914, but by 1920 the estate had become too expensive to maintain and was put up for auction. Bidding failed to attract the reserve price however, and the estate was put up for auction a second time as individual lots. It was at this time that the panelling in the Library was sold to Lady Baillie and relocated to Leeds Castle in Kent where it remains.

4.39 Edward Jessie Meaker, an antiques collector however purchased the entire estate in 1927 for £11,900, thereby preventing its break-up. The Meaker family modernised the house, installing bathrooms and electricity. In the garden, they created topiary of clipped yews and bays and inserted a herbaceous border along the central spine of the large kitchen garden in 1931. They also planted a number of roses especially in the old children's garden.

4.40 After the early deaths of Edward Meaker and his wife, the Hall was placed into a Trust and leased to Peterborough Hospital Board who used it as a convalescent home. After the Second World War it was used as a maternity hospital until 1971 when fire safety regulations forced it to close.

4.41 After a brief spell in the ownership of Peterborough Development Corporation, the Hall was purchased by the City Council and a scheme to create a 'Cultural Centre' was proposed. It was at this time that the lift and staircase were inserted in the northwest corner. The 'Cultural Centre' however failed to come to fruition, and in 1988 it was sold once again to the Sue Ryder Foundation in whose ownership it remains.

4.42 In the main east garden, parts of the 'American' gardens had been removed to allow for the laying of two lawn tennis courts (now restored to lawn). The long vista through the south garden became obscured by tree and shrub growth whilst the gateway salvaged from the old south wing was rebuilt in the early 1990s.

4.43 Far more significant was the erection of a substantial new private computer centre building in the early 1980s on land to the south of the large kitchen garden. The latter was used as a garden centre though this use has now ceased. At a similar time, the north-west garden was used for the laying out of a large model railway with attendant buildings. This survives in use today.

4.44 Sue Ryder Care undertook a significant restoration of the house, partly financed by grant aid from English Heritage. The most significant change to the plan form was the insertion of a staircase and lift in the northwest corner of the Hall. This cut through the floor levels and obliterated the northwest corner rooms; however the changes were accommodated within a single room thereby maintaining the plan form across each floor level. The works comprised a general restoration throughout the house, and included works to the principal staircase, plasterwork and flooring. The plans for those works relating to both the changes undertaken by Peterborough City Council and Sue Ryder Care survive and document these changes in detail.

4.45 The works are summarised below:

Hall:

- ➡ Subdivision of former Servants' Hall and Butler's Pantry to create Ladies, Gents and Disabled cloakrooms in northwest corner (Peterborough County Council)
- ➡ West passage re-plastered and floor re-laid (PCC)

- ➡ Support under screen to principal staircase replaced and floor re-laid (PCC)
- ➡ Ceiling and cornice to the Library renewed, and the walls lined with studwork to cill height; surround to the hearth renewed.
- ➡ The door through to the west passage from the hall, north of the existing doorway was blocked. The liftshaft was extended southwards, and the doorway to the kitchen in the southern portion of the link reinstated. A C20 lift located between the family staircase and backstaircase in the main house was removed and the floor made good. The flight travelling from the second floor to third floor of the back stair case was removed.
- ➡ General restoration of the architectural features including the re-hanging of the original doors to the entrance to the WC; removal of linoleum from the floors in the Hall, Library and Drawing Room; removal of the timber ceilings above the north and south entrances.
- ➡ Restoration work continued at first floor level. This included stripping the wallpaper except for one panel in the Great Chamber; restoration of the Victorian parquet floor; opening of blocked doorways through the rooms on the southern side. A small section of C19 wall was removed adjacent to the lift to accommodate an extension. Studwork partitions were inserted to create bathrooms and a sluice in the southern half between the main bedrooms.
- ➡ The second floor remained little altered. Changes included the removal of a C19 bathroom in the western passageway and the opening of a blocked doorway from the landing to the southwest bedroom [S10]. A WC was inserted in the northwest corner adjacent to the lift.
- ➡ Changes at third floor level were limited to the subdivision of the northwest corner to form WCs and storage accommodation.
- ➡ The basement was left largely untouched, with the only significant changes occurring to accommodate the lift extension. A studwork wall that divided the room was demolished and sections of the stone flags were lifted and re-laid to accommodate plant.

Service wing:

- ➡ At ground floor level, a section of the old range in the main kitchen was unblocked to reveal more of the archway and the C19 opening between the main kitchen and back kitchen was unblocked to create the current access through. The partition walls that created a corridor between the larder and cold larder adjacent to the kitchen were removed to create one large single volume as exists currently [G8].
- ➡ The removal of the C19 stone staircase against the north doorway in the central passage allowed this doorway to be unblocked and the original passageway with opposing doors reinstated. The floor across the ground floor was taken up and re-laid. The C19 arched opening through from the main kitchen, now café [G6], through to the back kitchen was reinstated.
- ➡ The first floor of the service wing was significantly altered. The 1980s plans indicate that the plan form of the service wing at that time was substantially different, with much less subdivision than currently existing. The section of the range to the west of the stack was a single open plan space, and a doorway was inserted to link through to the eastern side of the room. The floor inserted above the kitchen was lowered to its current height.
- ➡ The floor to the attic space was strengthened and upgraded to accommodate office space and a nurses' common room. Virtually the whole of the ceiling to the attic was stripped and replaced, as well as much of the wall surface. The east office [S11] remained otherwise unchanged, except for the opening up of the fireplace. The space to the north of the staircase in the central space was reorganised, with the partition relocated to form two WCs, and the room to the west was subdivided to create a nurses common room and a nurses changing room. The fireplace on this side was also opened up [S12]. The floor to the attic space to the west was strengthened with steel to accommodate services. The roof timbers were treated with preservative, and the service wing re-roofed in Collyweston slates. The balusters, newels and handrail to the staircase were retained but the rest of the stair was rebuilt.

4.46 In addition, the drystone walls along Thorpe Road were restored by Peterborough City Council and the Manpower Services Commission throughout the 1980s-early 1990s.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

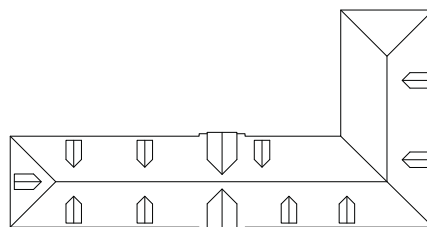
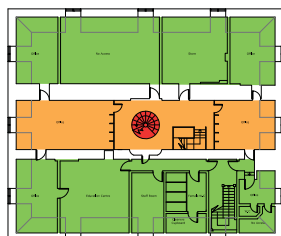
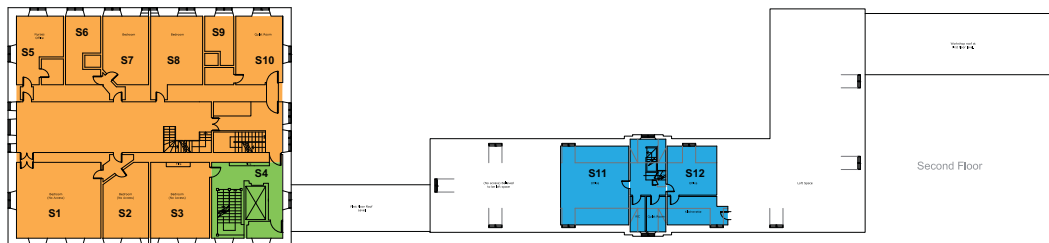
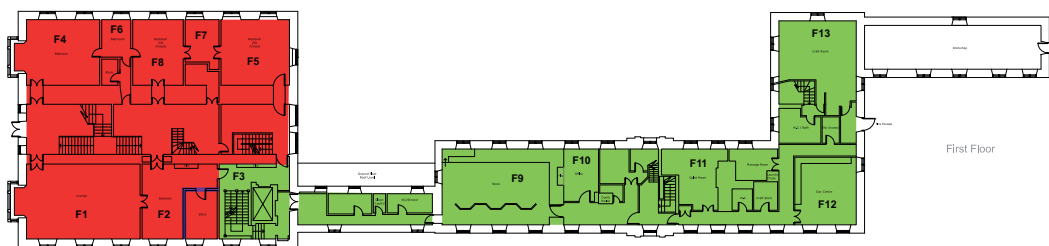
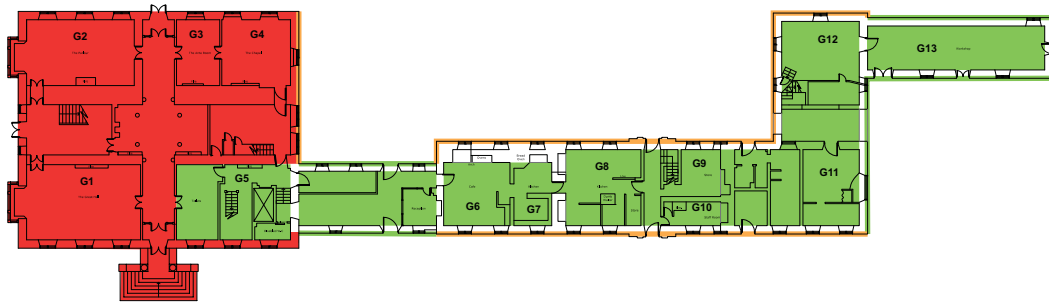
5.1 This section looks in turn at each elevation of the house, the internal rooms, the external spaces and the setting of the property to assess its significance and therefore its capacity to cope with change. This assessment takes two forms. Firstly it states the significance of the two main designated elements of the site as distinct wholes (i.e. the listed Thorpe Hall and registered Park and Garden) using the English Heritage 'Conservation Principles' approach. Following this is a more detailed assessment of the relative significances of the listed and registered heritage assets.

5.2 As the property is Grade I Listed, in general terms it must be considered to be of very high significance. Grade I listed buildings are of exceptional – sometimes international – interest, and constitute the top 2.5% of all listed structures.

5.3 The Park and Garden is included on the 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England' in Grade II* and is therefore overall also of very high significance. Grade II* gardens are considered to be of 'more than special interest' and comprise 27% of all Registered Parks and Gardens (9% are designated as Grade I).

5.4 Significance is assessed as follows:-

- ➡ Features of **very high significance** are considered to be those which are fundamental to the architectural and historic interest and therefore these effectively form part of the justification for designation at the upper tiers. They will survive in either an unaltered state or one where subsequent repairs or alterations have not undermined the original quality of the feature.
- ➡ Features of **high significance** are either ones which are original but which have been slightly altered so as to marginally undermine the original quality, or are later additions but ones which generally respect the architectural or historic interest.



- Third Floor
- KEY
- Very High
 - High
 - Moderate
 - Low Significance
 - No Significance

- Features of **moderate significance** are either original features which have been significantly altered so that their original character has been changed or later additions and alterations which are of neutral quality.
- Features of **low significance** are either original features so significantly altered that their original character has been obliterated, or are later features of marginal quality.
- Features of **no significance** are later features which do not contribute to the architectural or historic interest of the building.

PART I 'CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE'

Evidential value

Very high significance

Hall

5.5 This building is hugely important within the national context as it is only one of very few surviving buildings of similar scale and status built during the Commonwealth period. National instability as a result of the Civil War had made country house building particularly difficult, and consequently Thorpe Hall has relatively few contemporaries. Of those that do survive, Thorpe Hall has been described as the most significant of all such houses ('Country Life', 185 [31 October 1991], p.69).

5.6 Its built form and craftsmanship manifested within the fabric at Thorpe Hall provide important evidence for the construction of high status country houses during this turbulent period. Unfortunately none of the original moveable building contents survive, but the remarkable level of survival of internal decoration and little altered external elevations give Thorpe Hall great evidential value for understanding buildings of this particular period.

5.7 Its architectural detailing, described as 'Artisan Mannerism', provides evidence of contemporary architectural fashions and thinking, and makes an important contribution to our understanding of the evolution of architecture during this transitional period. This is also true of its plan from which although altered, still demonstrates the hierarchy of spaces and the relationship between service areas and the principal rooms.

5.8 Changes to the plan form throughout the C17 to the present day document changing social hierarchies and organisation of space within such houses of high status and provide a physical record of changing functional and social needs of the building's occupiers over the centuries.



Park and Garden

5.9 Similarly to the Hall, few gardens survive from the Protectorate era and the combination of Hall and Garden surviving from this period is extremely rare. Though altered from its initial landscaping, the surviving garden walls enclosing the compartments provide substantial evidence of the original design intentions. Subsequent changes create an interesting palimpsest of different garden phases, supported by documentary evidence surviving from 1760 onwards. This is enhanced by garden buildings, including a C18 summerhouse, garden walls and gateways to other garden compartments. These, as well the potential for garden archaeology to reveal original layouts and planting, greatly enhances the material record pertaining to both pleasure and productive gardens.

5.10 Some of this evidence survives as earthworks around the parkland, such as the earthworks associated with historic fish ponds and an adjacent grotto at Holywell (in separate ownership). The surviving works undertaken during the ownership of the Rev Strong are also of high (as opposed to very high) significance.

5.11 The parkland has potential to yield other important archaeological information relating to earlier periods, with known finds including a Roman coin in the 1950s, the alleged discovery in the mid-C18 of a Roman building and mosaic, and the existence of a possible medieval 'holy well' that was later incorporated into the aforementioned grotto.

Historical value

High significance

Hall

5.12 As a building from the Commonwealth period, Thorpe Hall has important historical associations with the Cromwellian era as a whole as well as Oliver St John – one of the key national figures within the Parliamentary reform movement. Funded through the demise of Royalists and built in the window of the Protectorate, Thorpe Hall is a direct result of Cromwell's brief rise to power and that of his supporters following the Civil War and execution of Charles I.

5.13 The building is also directly associated with one of the figures instrumental in the rebuilding of the City of London after the Great Fire, Peter Mills. Not only did Mills shape the post-1666 architectural form and layout of London, he shared this task with such celebrated figures as Sir Christopher Wren, Sir Roger Pratt and Hugh May.

5.14 With its almost complete interiors and largely unaltered exteriors, as well as its working and ornamental gardens and larger estate, Thorpe Hall is a fine example of a mid-C17 country estate. It illustrates the way in which the country's elite lived over the centuries and how large country estates functioned both socially and operationally. The fact that the house and land remain in single ownership adds to its value.

5.15 The illustrative value of places is high where they display innovations of consequence, including those relating to social organisation. Thorpe Hall appears to have been built at an interesting cusp, at a time when the distinction between 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' areas was beginning to be formalised and a degree of separation was realised between the household and the family and their guests. Thorpe Hall appears to have undertaken some of these principles but they were not fully executed to the degree seen in other contemporary houses and more so in those that followed.

Park and Garden

5.16 The Park and Garden shares the same important historical associations as the Hall, associated in the same way with the owners and occupiers through the centuries. It has important illustrative historic value in displaying how the elite functioned within the landscape, with formal pleasure gardens enclosed around the house before the wilder parkland beyond.

5.17 The bones of the original design survive, with the formal quadrants close to the house overlooking the wilder parkland beyond. This could be surveyed from the raised terrace in the southeast corner, as well as from the viewing cupola on the house roof. The modifications over the centuries illustrate changing fashions and uses, as the formal gardens and enclosures of the C17 gave way to a more open aspect to the east and south. The parkland was not formally landscaped as at other estates through the C18, but rather remained in its tamed-wilderness form.

5.18 The grounds of Thorpe Hall also display how the landscape supported the functions within the Hall, with its ice house and home farm to the southwest. The creation of the Victorian kitchen garden with its hot houses illustrate the increasingly intensive production and demand for produce as well as the increasing sophistication of methods of cultivation. Similarly, the introduction of the children's garden reflects the C19 owners and how the Strong family used the landscape.



Fireplace in Chapel



Southern gateway

Aesthetic value

Very high significance

Hall

5.19 Thorpe Hall is a very attractive house, built on a high point with commanding views to and from the immediate area to the south and east from Longthorpe Parkway. The well proportioned symmetrical elevations, square chimneys, ashlar work, quoins and Collyweston slate roof have been intentionally designed to create a well-balanced whole that is aesthetically pleasing and impressive. Internally, the joinery, plasterwork, fireplaces and principal staircase display high status designs of a high quality to match the fine decoration of the exterior elevation.

Park and Garden

5.20 The building is enhanced by its surrounding mature landscape within which it is centrally located, with a historic mid-C19 garden to the front of the east elevation, mature tree specimens, an avenue of limes leading to the north elevation and formal walled gardens.

5.21 The enclosed gardens, including the mid-C19 'American' garden on the eastern side, comprise historic landscaping and planting as well as garden walls and structures. Not only are the individual compartments and structures of aesthetic value, they have been consciously designed to be in harmony with the elevations of the house and as a result the Hall, gardens and garden structures are mutually complimentary.

5.22 Together these elements contribute very positively to the Longthorpe Conservation Area which includes the parkland surrounding Thorpe Hall and the historic village of Longthorpe. From Thorpe Road, the drystone boundary walls and mature trees and the open parkland with views of the hall are key features of the area.



South elevation of service wing

Communal value

Very high significance

Hall

5.23 Thorpe Hall provides important services to the local community and that of the wider Peterborough area. Currently providing respite and day care to seriously ill patients, Thorpe Hall has played a significant role in the lives of many patients and their families. Many individuals have strong personal associations and memories of Thorpe Hall through its use as a venue for funerals and wedding services. Prior to its current role, it served as a maternity hospital and has therefore over the C20 been associated by many people with important moments in their lives.

5.24 The ground floor of the building is open to visitors, with a charity shop, local craft workshops and coffee shop that provide an important local amenity and resource for the local area.

Park and Garden

5.25 The wider parkland is accessible via public footpaths and provides important amenity space for residents of Peterborough. It forms an important strategic space on the City's western fringe, providing a large area of green open space adjacent to the city centre.

5.26 The gardens themselves provide beneficial amenity space to the residents and visitors to Thorpe Hall. A model railway installed within one of the walled gardens has been a popular if not especially widely-known attraction since the 1980s. The large kitchen garden was a private garden centre for some years but is now no longer used.



PART II: RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCES

BUILDING EXTERIORS

Setting of the building

From the north – *High significance*

5.27 The approach from the north is the main public entrance, leading from Thorpe Road. This had a Victorian lodge at the front entrance as shown on the 1958-59 OS Map. This had been demolished by the time of the publication of the 1970 OS map.

5.28 The north has the most formal setting of all the elevations, with an avenue of lime trees dating from different periods flanking the drive way. The building is designed to be formally approached from the north along this lime avenue planted on the axis of the flight of steps and doorway. Ashlar garden walls enclose a forecourt to the front of the house that is now used for parking. There is planting within the forecourt, including two large mature trees to either side of the door, echoing the symmetry of the north elevation. The gate piers are similar to those on the south side, with niches, carved lion motifs and falcons mounted on either side, all contributing to the sense of formality.

5.29 The area outside the garden walls is laid to grass with some remnants of parkland fencing. Wooden fencing along the driveway is in poor condition and unsightly. Car parking in the paddock north of the house to the west of the lime avenue, as well as adjacent to the walled garden is an unfortunate but necessary intrusion that detracts slightly from the quality of the setting.

5.30 From the northern end of the driveway, the avenue of trees and others to the front of the house largely block any views southwest to the service wing and walled garden to the west of the house. As you approach the house, the garden wall can be seen running east and west of the entrance, but views to the service wing continue to be largely screened by mature trees inside and outside of the walled garden.



View eastwards from western drive

5.31 The public entrance to the Hall is through a pedimented arch in the garden wall and along a path (created in the 1850s) running between the garden wall to the orchard and the balustrades enclosing the western side of the forecourt which delivers you to a door within the link building. The wall to the garden is in disrepair and propped with timber shores.

From the west – *Moderate significance*

5.32 The western aspect forms the exit from the site, marked by a C19 lodge, now boarded. The exit to the road is on the same axis as the entrance to the service courtyard which can be seen beyond the gate piers. These take a much simpler form, indicating the lower status of this entrance and exit to the service area of the Hall. Views to the Hall itself are largely screened by three mature cedars outside the garden walls which dominate the view, as well as the formal garden walls. The chimney shafts to the Hall are the most visible elements, and there are limited views to the archway of the service wing. A large area of informal car parking to the west of the walled garden demarcated by rustic wooden fencing constitutes an unfortunate intrusion into an otherwise garden environment, and the raised black-top driveway creates an institutional rather than domestic feel. A stone garden wall to another walled garden forms a positive boundary to the south and screens all views in this direction.

5.33 Beyond the gate piers, an internal courtyard is formed, enclosed by the west elevation of the service wing and other service buildings and garden walls. This space has the character of a service courtyard, with lower status buildings and attractive but functional stone sets and pavers on the floor. Car parking and wheelie bins betray the more functional use of this part of the site.

From the south – *High significance*

5.34 This elevation commands views over open land to the south and west, stretching towards the River Nene. A raised platform in the south-eastern corner of the gardens creates extended views back to the Hall, over the garden and out over the open former parkland. The garden walls and ornate gateway create an enclosed, formal setting to the garden and elevation, with paths on an axis to the gateway and other garden structures linking to the flight of stone steps in the centre of the elevation. The gateway is impressive, with ashlar stone piers with niches and topped with



View from south east corner

falcons, the crest of the St Johns. The outside seating area immediately adjacent to the West wing and link building is relatively discrete, located behind a garden wall with another fine gateway with pediment and volutes at the base. The brick walls of a later service building located below ground level between the garden walls survive.

From the east – *Very high significance*

5.35 This is the most ornamental of all elevations, with an 1850s garden and older garden buildings and ornaments. A gateway on the central axis of the house provides access and views to open land and former historic parkland beyond. The C20 restoration of the garden has enhanced its significance by restoring and revealing historic elements and providing a formal garden setting to the principal elevation as intended. This aspect was designed to be viewed from height from the bay windows in the principal first floor rooms, and therefore the east setting is of very high significance.

Hall

North elevation – *Very high significance*

5.36 The north elevation is of ashlar with stone quoins at the corners. It is of three storeys of seven bays, with attic space above lit by dormer windows, and a stone band at first floor level.

5.37 The ground floor has C20 doors with a leaded glass fanlight above. A flight of eight rectangular stone steps sweeps up to the doorway, lined on either side with stone balustrade with an urn at each end. The doorway has a balcony above, supported on two Tuscan columns flanking the window with stone balustrade.

5.38 The window above the porch has a segmental pediment and shouldered architrave, and decorated with scrolls. Two other windows (bays 2 and 6) on the first floor have open triangular pediments. The dormer windows have triangular pediments either side of a central segmental pediment.

5.39 The roof is of Collyweston slates laid in diminishing courses with a deep overhang over



View northwards from southern garden boundary



West elevation

a cornice supported on modillions. The roof has a hipped profile, with four square stone chimney shafts rising above from the central roof square.

5.40 The timber window frames are not original; it is possible that they were originally fitted with stone mullions and transoms as surviving in the west elevation (Pevsner, 1968). Aside for the changes to the windows, the elevation is very little altered.

South elevation – *Very high significance*

5.41 The south elevation is identical to the north, aside from the sweeping segmental steps as opposed to rectangular and ironwork to the porch instead of stone balusters. It enjoys a better preserved setting, looking over maintained gardens to a gate set into the garden wall positioned on a central axis to the main door of the house. Other than the windows, it has been very little altered.

West elevation – *High significance*

5.42 The west elevation retains the only stone mullions and transoms within the central bay of windows at ground, first and second floor levels. The stone window dressings give this elevation a different character. At first floor level, pedimented windows sit either side of a central bay of two windows located side by side each of three lights. This is replicated at second floor level but with smaller windows without mullions. Three dormer windows light the attic floor. At ground floor, the moulding of a fourth opening can be seen rising above the roof of the single storey element to the link. This is a doorway giving access to the link. The stone band continues around this elevation at first floor.

5.43 A stone link building between the stables and the Hall abuts the west elevation to the north of the facade, and a stone garden wall adjoins flush with the south elevation.

5.44 Facing the service wing and altered with the addition of the link building, this elevation is the least decorative of all and has lower aesthetic and design values. Owing to the window survival it has high evidential value however and is therefore considered to have high significance.

East elevation – *Very high significance*

5.45 The east elevation is the most different, with three bays across all three floors. At ground and first floor, the windows either side of the larger central window have projecting bays. The origination of these has caused much debate. Pevsner describes the east front as being ‘Victorian-looking’, and suggests that this was a result of the works mid-C19 works done by Francis Ruddle. The consensus appears to be that the bays are likely to be original, but with some C19 modification. This includes the loss of the original windows which had been removed by the publication of the 1919 Country Life articles. The central window to the second floor is round with a single light either side. The three full roof dormers have triangular pediments either side of a central segmental pediment. The east elevation constitutes the garden front.

Link building – *Moderate significance*

5.46 The Link building is a C18 construction with a mid-C19 extension dated 1851. Hakewill’s plan of c.1850 shows the original two storey element prior to the Victorian single storey extension. It is a slender building, recessed marginally behind the quoins to the north elevation of the service wing but not as deep and therefore stepped back from the line of the south elevation of the wing. A stone band runs along the north elevation at the same height as that on the adjacent service wing. The link is recessed back from the north elevation of the Hall. Constructed in stone it continues the building style found on the Hall, with a square stone chimney shaft, stone dressed windows and segmented pediments over the doorways. The north elevation is of two bays with a doorway in the western half, and the south of three bays with a doorway again in the western half. The window bays stand slightly proud of the face of the elevation.

Service wing

North elevation – *High significance*

5.47 The service range is contemporary with the Hall and built in the same style marking a clear association between the two buildings. They share a close functional and aesthetic relationship.





South elevation



West elevation with courtyard

The use of dressed stone rather than ashlar however creates a clear hierarchy between the two buildings and marks this as the service wing. Nevertheless, the building displays elements of high status and wealth appropriate for an estate of this importance. The building sits on an ashlar plinth, and an ashlar stone band wraps around the building at first floor level.

5.48 The north elevation is symmetrical about the central entranceway, with a centrally placed bellcote and a pair of square chimney shafts rising either side. The two opposing doorways placed on the north and south elevations are particularly striking. A bay of ashlar stone rises full height to a Dutch gable with full dormer window. A triangular pediment rests above an oval window lighting an arched doorway at ground floor level with pilasters either side. At first floor level a window decorated either side with carved stone volutes sits beneath stone modillions, rising up to the scrolled Dutch gable with dormer window and segmented pediment. The north elevation is of 12 bays at ground and first storey level. Five dormer windows light the attic floor.

South elevation – High significance

5.49 The south elevation is the same as the north elevation, but with a wing projecting south from the west end. This therefore alters the arrangement in the southwest corner and the dormer windows are positioned closer to the central gable than their counterparts to the east of the central dormer as a result. Unlike the north elevation, it has been rendered in modern times and scored to have the appearance of stone ashlar coursing.

5.50 The inner return of the wing has three stone mullion and transom windows at first floor, with two at ground floor and an archway through to the outbuildings beyond. There are no dormer windows in the roof. Like the south elevation of the service wing it has been rendered. The south elevation has a single window at ground and first floor levels.

West elevation – Moderate significance

5.51 At first floor, the west elevation of the wing was originally symmetrical about the archway, with a window either side of a central opening. At ground floor, the archway gives external access through the wing to the south side of the service wing. A second archway to the north of the open

archway has been glazed in to form the shop. This opening was formed in the C19 when it became the coach house. Two dormer windows light the attic space and a square stone chimney shaft, smaller in scale than those found elsewhere on the wing breaks the hipped Collyweston slate roof to the south and breaks the symmetry of the upper floors. A modern metal fire escape landing and staircase provides an emergency exit route from the doorway at first floor level and is an unsightly element on the elevation.

5.52 A smaller two storey building has been built perpendicular to the south wing. A smaller building is indicated occupying this position on Hakewill's c.1850 plan but located further west, thereby leaving a gap between the south wing and the building, joined together with a shallow link. This suggests that it has been significantly enlarged and altered/rebuilt in the later C19. It is shown as currently existing on the first edition OS map.

5.53 It has been built in a matching style, with similar stone coursing as found on the north and west elevations of the service block. The building sits on a stone plinth with a stone band at eaves level. It has five windows at first floor level directly under the eaves. It has been altered at ground floor level. A timber lintel stretching across the western half indicates a large opening that has now been blocked and a window inserted. The windows and the central door share the same moulded stone dressings. Large stone jambs indicate that the doorway on the eastern half was originally larger, supported by the differences apparent in the infill material. The timber lintel is possibly a historic beam relocated from elsewhere.

5.54 Hakewill's plan shows a long shallow range extending south from this building, joining at the southwest corner to form an L-shape. This was the South Wing which no longer exists. It is not shown on the 1886-1889 OS map.

5.55 A second long range no longer extant is shown on Hakewill's plan opposite to the north. The building in the northwest corner of the service yard may be a remnant of this range, or material from this earlier range might have been used for its construction. It is shown in its current form on the first OS map.

5.56 The west elevation is the greatest distance from the Hall and, unlike the south and north elevations, it was not designed to be seen from the garden areas or formal approaches, nor is it seen in the same view as the Hall. This is reflected in its historic use as the service area to the main house. It is therefore of lesser sensitivity than other elevations of the service wing and in terms of its contribution to the immediate setting to the house.

East elevation – *High significance*

5.57 The east elevation at ground and first floor level has been largely obscured by the construction of a link to the main Hall. Like the south elevation it has been rendered, with expressed stone quoins. A centrally placed roof dormer is placed within the roof slope. Despite its level of change, it has high significance due to its close proximity and direct visual relationship with the west elevation of the Hall.



Principal staircase

Building Interiors – Hall

Ground Floor – *Very high significance*

5.58 The ground floor has an impressive range of rooms, two of which retain their highly decorative original plaster ceilings (G2 and G4). The chimneypiece and overmantel in the Hall [G1] are original, with the latter displaying plaster figures. The Parlour [G2] lost its panelling when it was sold to the owners of Leeds Castle c.1927 where it remains today. The fireplace has a fine example of a C17 stone hood which is not original to the house but installed by the Meakers in the C20. The fireplace was originally located on the same wall but further to the west.

5.59 The Anteroom [G3] has historic panelling considered to be C18 and retains its exceptional moulded and coved plaster ceiling. The fireplace is original and constructed of freestone and polished limestone. The adjacent room now used as a chapel [G4] has exceptionally fine panelling in oak with ornately carved friezes to the door cases. It was originally St John's 'Closet', or study, and was a room of high status along with the Hall and Parlour. The fireplace is again of freestone and polished limestone, embellished with marble to reflect its higher status.

5.60 The central spaces connecting these rooms are similarly grand, with flagstone and slate floor, wainscot, decorative plasterwork around the doors and marble fireplaces. A series of Corinthian columns decorate the space organised around a central atrium. These columns originally formed a screen to the open Hall and were moved in the mid-C19 as part of Rev. Strong's modifications undertaken by Ruddle.

5.61 The staircase of ornately carved timber showing pierced acanthus is contemporary to the construction of the house and of great aesthetic significance. In the mid-C19 an additional flight was added leading west from the second half-turn as the stair climbs, giving access to the central landing.

5.62 A back staircase behind a screen in the western half of the house was relocated from its position on the south wall to its current position on the north wall in the C19. It retains its original historic fabric however.



C20 staircase



Great Chamber

5.63 The northwest corner has undergone significant changes through the C19 and more significantly in the C20. This corner was originally the Servants' Hall, mirroring the Hall opposite but with plainer decoration. It was later subdivided in the C18 and then reconfigured again in the C19 to provide additional service functions. In the C20 more substantial changes were made with the insertion of WCs, a liftshaft to the first and second floors and a new staircase to all the upper floors. While much of the decorative work has been retained, such as the panelling, limestone and freestone fireplace and doorcase to the north-south passage, the plan form of this area has thus been significantly altered, both historically and in more recent times. The insertion of the lift and new staircase has removed significant historic fabric and altered the spatial qualities of this space as well as the circulation routes between this floor and those above. As a result, the northwest corner of the ground floor is of considerably less significance than the rest of the ground floor spaces.

5.64 The exceptional survivals of the interior decoration on the ground floor make this an area of very high significance.

First floor – Very high significance

[No access to southern half of First Floor]

5.65 The first floor has retained much of its historic plan form, although the extension of the principal staircase has altered the original circulation routes.

5.66 The northeast room over the Hall on the ground floor was the Great Chamber [F1], commanding fine views over the east garden and beyond to distant views of Peterborough Cathedral. This is an exceptionally fine room, with decorative plasterwork to the doorcases and cornice, and high quality wainscot (the latter is not thought to be original but a later addition/replacement). The ceiling is elaborately decorated with geometric shapes and is thought to date from the end of the C18. Shutters survive to the windows, and in between each opening are large mirrors (although glass of this size cannot have formed a part of the original design). The fireplace is original and comprised of black and white marble used throughout the first floor. The parquet



Detail of screen in western half

floor dates from the Victorian period. The exceptional decorative features and the original high status of this space give it very high significance.

5.67 The room to the west is thought to have been a withdrawing room [F2] and clearly of high status as evidenced by the elaborate doorcase with painted frieze, original moulded ceiling and marble fireplace. The surviving elements are of very high significance, but the rest of the features that likely decorated this room to match that of the adjacent room have been lost. The quality of the space has been further compromised by internal partitions; the damage mitigated to some extent by the way in which they do not extend to the full height of the room.

5.68 The central landing is grand with screens dividing the space into four sections. This landing was not originally accessed directly from the principal staircase and the screen to the west of the principal stair was modified accordingly to create a new opening. The two west screens in timber are Victorian. The double door arrangement to the principal rooms survives, with elaborate doorcases, decorative panel doors and traces of the historic painted friezes.

5.69 The inserted lift shaft and stairs continue through this floor to the second floor. They have been inserted within the third bedroom, thereby maintaining the plan form of the arrangement of rooms on this floor. However, the spatial organisation of this room has been significantly altered, and the loss of floor and ceiling fabric is significant. This corner of the floor is therefore of less significance than the rest of the spaces.

5.70 There is some debate as to the original use of the rooms, with the state bedroom cited to be either the south-east corner bedroom or the north-west corner room.

5.71 The south side has not been seen as it is in use as private bedrooms.



Spiral stair

Second floor – *High significance*

[Access to central gallery only]

5.72 The second floor is accessed by an ornate closed string oak staircase with turned balusters. It rises from the first to the second floor with two half-turns. The fabric is original C17 fabric and contemporary with the house but it was reset in the C19 to form its current configuration. At first floor level it is set behind a large carved timber screen spanning the width of the gallery, with two arches set either side of a rectangular opening. The plan form of the second floor is largely intact, aside from the northwest corner. There appears to have been some subdivision of the rooms on the south side (but these have not been internally inspected).

Third floor – *Moderate / High significance / Very high significance*

5.73 The third floor has a barrel vaulted ceiling, with sympathetic modern glazed screens subdividing the space at the east and west ends. It is accessed by the historic west staircase that begins on the first floor. An elaborately carved timber spiral staircase rises to the ceiling, once providing access to the belvedere cupola from which the gardens and wider landscape could be viewed. This no longer exists and had been removed by the time of the 1789 inventory. The stair is C17 craftsmanship of high quality, with turned carved balusters and curved handrail, and therefore is considered to be of very high significance.

5.74 The central landing is an impressive space with its barrel vaulted ceiling. Visitors and the household would have used this space to access the cupola, hence the decorated spiral staircase and use of moulded architraves to the door openings off the central gallery. This space is much plainer in its decoration and is of lower status than the floors below, but nevertheless has important decorative components. Offices have been created at the eastern and western ends using glass partitions which have kept the sense of space.

5.75 The areas on either side of this landing however were not public spaces, and are therefore of lower status with a functional quality more readily associated with ancillary areas of the house. There has been some sub-division, including the insertion of WCs, and the modern staircase

continues to alter the sense of space in the northwest corner. These areas are of only moderate significance.

Basement – *Moderate significance*

5.76 The Hall sits on a lower ground basement with fine stone vaulted ceilings on squared columns and dressed stone door jambs. The high ceiling height shows that this space was clearly always intended for regular use and there are surviving cold shelves and other features for food storage, doors with ventilation grilles and stone flag flooring. Numerous later alterations including the partitioning of some of the spaces and floor strengthening works. As a functional space, the basement obviously lacks the high levels of decoration of the main building above and is therefore only of moderate significance.

Service wing

Ground floor – *Moderate significance*

5.77 The changes summarised in Section 4 indicate that the Service wing has undergone significant alterations to its plan form, most particularly over the C19 and C20 centuries. The easternmost room, now the cafe [G6], was originally the kitchen with two hearths against the southern wall recessed behind large elliptical ashlar arches. This space was originally double height until a ceiling was inserted in the C19. It has been divided from the rest of the original kitchen to the west [G7] with a C19 partition, with an arched doorway giving access between the two rooms.

5.78 The north-south passage between the north and south gabled entrances survives along with historic boarded doors. The east and west walls however date from the C19 and are not in their original locations which were further to the east and west respectively to create a more generous passageway. The staircase to the west of the passageway was inserted in the 1980s to give access to the first floor, and the C19 stone staircase that was inserted against the north passage door was removed. To the west of the passage is a store [G9] with fireplace set behind

another large stone ashlar arch and quarry tiles to the floor. A partition wall divides this from a smaller room to the north [G10], also with an arched fireplace. These fireplaces indicate the former C17 function of this space as a bakehouse. In the northern of the two rooms the partition wall meets the fireplace awkwardly, and the wall abuts the window, blocking the westernmost of the two lights. The architectural features of the room therefore have been somewhat compromised.

5.79 WCs have been inserted west of the store and further west again is the shop [G11], accessed from the original entrance under the arch. The ground floor of the south wing retains its panelling to shoulder height [G12], and a staircase in the north-eastern corner of the room provides access to the first floor. This stairway has an awkward relationship to both the ground floor and first floor rooms and first floor window, and is most certainly a later insertion. The south wing is linked internally to the C19 workshop to the west [G13] with a doorway.

5.80 While the exterior elevations of the Service wing are of a similar quality to the main Hall, the interiors being of lower status were not subject to the same decorative treatments. There are some architectural features of note however, including the ashlar work on the arches and fireplaces, indicating that although functional spaces, they were still executed to a high quality. The Service wing was essential to the operation of the main House and they share a very close physical, visual and functional relationship and it is therefore of great importance. Relative to the Hall however, the cumulative changes and general lack of internal architectural detailing or embellishment makes them of lesser significance and sensitivity.

First Floor – *Moderate significance*

5.81 The plan form of the first floor has likewise been significantly altered. This is particularly so in the western half which before the 1980s was a single open space. The central store room above the kitchen is an impressive space, with its original hand moulded vaulted plaster ceiling, timber cornice and dormer windows. A set of pulleys are located high on the western wall which may have been connected to its C19 use as a laundry or to its earlier use as a kitchen prior to the ceiling insertion. The upper floor to the kitchen is entered through a doorway with fine ashlar stone jambs which is thought to have been originally a viewing platform for the steward.

5.82 The rooms generally lack embellishment, however like the ground floor there are some nice surviving features, including the large fireplace in F10 which is speculated to have been the steward's room, ashlar work to the door jambs to F9 and the fireplace in F11. The stair to the ground floor is a late C20 insertion and located behind a modern glazed partition.

5.83 Above the link are three rooms, one with a plain C19 fireplace, but with no other internal features of interest.

5.84 The almost total loss of the original plan form and much of the fabric respectively renders it difficult to understand how the upper floor of the Service wing functioned, and accordingly is has lost much of its evidential and historic values. It is therefore considered to be of moderate significance.

Second Floor – Low significance

5.85 The rooms on the top floor located either side of the bellcote are very plain, with exposed beams, plasterboarded ceilings, and plain fireplaces. These are C19 but evidence has shown they are in a C17 position. The space within the gable has been subdivided to form a quiet room and WC. Always intended to be low status, ancillary spaces, and with significant alterations, this floor (excluding the roof structures) is of low significance.

Link building – Moderate significance

5.86 Internally the link is very plain, with a reception desk inserted in the western end. It has a high ceiling with a large window set high into the northern wall. It has not retained any of its original features relating to function and understanding its operational use through the C18 and C19 is therefore difficult. It is however important in understanding the relationship of the Service wing with the Hall from the C18 onwards. It is considered to be of moderate significance.



East garden

Gardens

East Garden – *Very high significance*

5.87 The original garden comprised a parterre divided into quarters with statues in the centre of each and where the paths crossed in the centre. To the south and accessed by a central flight of steps was a raised bowling green with views south and east towards the River Nene. A more formal raised walk apparently stood to the north of the parterre garden. The remains of the southern steps and retaining walls were revealed during archaeological work (by Ian Meadows in 1986).

5.88 The garden was significantly remodelled by Rev Strong in the 1850s who was advised by Sir John Naesmyth. The western parterres nearest the house, the remodelled banks, the ‘wilderness’ garden to the north all date from this period whilst Strong allowed the C18 summerhouse to line with the re-erected entrance gate from the south wing and the gate to the large kitchen garden and so created a long east-west vista through the south garden. The southern raised gravel walk, although relatively plain but with some mature C19 trees, gives fine views out into the surrounding parkland.

5.89 The gardens are important because of their surviving mid-C19 features but perhaps more importantly because of the relationship with the main reception rooms in the hall and their outlook.

South Garden – *High significance*

5.90 Originally there were two separate gardens to the south; one immediately in front of the main house and one framed by the south and west wings. By the C18 these appear to have been combined and as today were largely laid to lawn. A clear path links the south door to a gateway in the south wall whilst relatively recent hedge planting has recreated the feeling of a separate south and south-west garden.

5.91 In the south west garden, the archway from the original south wing was rebuilt in the C19 and once more stands on axis of the east-west vista. The southern boundary on the south





Rebuilt archway



South West Garden

west side is relatively heavily planted and this serves to focus attention on the more open south elevation of the hall itself.

South West Gardens – *Moderate significance*

5.92 Largely on the site of the south wing, Strong constructed a children's garden with an oval central pond and radiating walks with beds between them. This largely still survives whilst the adjacent summerhouse in its south-east corner has been restored. The attractive arched brick plinths, presumably of former greenhouses survive to the north of the children's garden.

5.93 Beyond a strong hedge line is the former C19 kitchen garden. This was used throughout the 1980s-90s as a commercial nursery but is now heavily overgrown although the central yew hedges planted by the Meakers in the 1930s are still evident. An area at the eastern end has been cleared and is used by residents of the hall for recreational purposes.

5.94 The gardens do not relate to the key rooms or spaces within the hall but do contribute to the setting of the hall when seen from Thorpe Road down the West Avenue.

The North West Gardens – *Moderate significance*

5.95 Originally these were two separate but seemingly linked gardens; the one to the west containing a circular feature which it has been speculated may have been some form of early wilderness garden with rings of hedges and clipped trees encircling a central pool. The garden next to the North Forecourt was square with a perimeter path lined by trees and a central north-south path also lined by trees.

5.96 The Rev Strong unified the two gardens possibly as a kitchen garden and built a new wall at the east end to enter the link between the house and west wing to act as a servants' entrance. This wall is faced with stone on the east side but is brick on the garden side.

5.97 In the late 1970s / early 1980s, the garden was leased to the Peterborough Model Engineers Club and they laid out tracks and constructed a bridge and various low buildings.



View from southern garden boundary



North West Garden as seen from bridge

5.98 A circular feature with low stone walls exists in the western part of the garden but it seems unlikely that this is part of the possible 'wilderness garden' shown on the earliest plans which seems to have been removed by Rev Strong. What survives in the garden are various orchard trees a mature cedar and mature, but presumably self-set, ash and horse chestnut trees. The increasing maturity of some of the trees is beginning to destabilise the walls – that to the east has been propped by raking shores for some years and that to the north is beginning to show signs of movement.

5.99 This garden is largely hidden behind its high stone walls and is only readily visible from the upper floors of the west wing.

The North Forecourt – *High significance*

5.100 This has always effectively been the main entrance court for visitors to the house and was therefore presumably always a relatively formal space entered through the imposing gates. Rev Strong edged the borders and probably gravelled the rest. He was also said to have planted a monkey puzzle tree in the centre of the court, though this was chopped down by the Meakers in the 1930s as it obscured views of the house along the North Avenue.

5.101 Today the space is largely used for parking though there are two large evergreen oaks which are an imposing presence when looking towards the hall along the north avenue.

5.102 The main importance of the North Forecourt is as the ante-room to the hall, being the first part of the walled gardens which a visitor sees and providing the setting for the main entrance façade of the building.

The Parkland – *Generally high significance*

5.103 The parkland covers some 70 acres (28.3ha) and is vital to the setting of the hall. The striking view of Thorpe Hall from the Thorpe Parkway is one of city's most striking views.



5.104 Until relatively recently, the parkland was used for cattle grazing and this helped create a pastoral setting for the building which is important given the nearby major roads and fact that the house is only around a mile from the city centre.

5.105 The land to the south and east of the hall is relatively open with perimeter tree planting close to the parkway and further planting, including some trees presumably planted by Rev Strong along Thorpe Road. The restored drystone walls along Thorpe Hall are a very important visual boundary and provide a strong 'edge' to the parkland contrasting with the suburban housing areas on the east and north sides of Thorpe Road.

5.106 The north avenue is very striking, though some trees had to be replanted in the 1980s (by the City Council). The remains of an eastern avenue can just be traced though now there is no clear sign (other than from aerial photography) of the south avenue or ride which linked the hall and Home Farm. The latter is now largely subsumed at the end of a residential cul-de-sac. The remains of an ice house are said to exist in the parkland south of the west wing. The Holy Well, an area of fishponds which was remodelled as a grotto and watergardens in the C18 still exists to the south of the parkland though its visual association with the hall is now relatively tenuous due to intervening C20 housing developments.

5.107 The paddock areas to the north of the hall are generally of grass with gravel paths and parking areas and used for car parking. The dense planting along Thorpe Road generally hides parked cars from the road. The sadly derelict west lodge marks the west entrance and offers clear scope for enhancement if it can be repaired and reoccupied.

5.108 Perhaps the main loss to the parkland setting of the hall came in the early 1980s when a large new building for an electronics company was erected in the western parkland between the hall and Home Farm. Although relatively low, this can be seen from the hall's formal gardens and from Thorpe Road it means that the impression of a hall in its parkland is lost from south-west of the west drive. This area is now of low significance.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Thorpe Hall is one of only a few prestigious houses built during the Commonwealth Period and it is therefore of considerable national architectural and historic interest. Its interest is enhanced by its surviving formal gardens and the parkland around them. Although the gardens were considerably altered during the C19, the work is of high quality. Similarly although the parkland has been truncated particularly by the Longthorpe Parkway and the 1980s computer centre to the west of the hall, the relationship between the house and its parkland remains strong and the Hall is a major landmark on one of the main routes into the centre of Peterborough.

6.2 The building's value stems from its very high quality architecture, a result of its being designed by an eminent architect of the time. Whilst there have been alterations especially in the C19, the external appearance of the Hall and the service wing remains virtually intact and the hall and the formal garden walls, gatepiers, arches and niches comprise an architectural composition of considerable note.

6.3 The interior of the Hall, particularly on the ground and first floors, is extremely fine. The original plan form remains easily recognisable on all floors and the formal rooms are of exceptionally high significance. The interior of the west wing, which was built as kitchen offices etc, is of lesser significance partly because of its original lower status and because it has been considerably altered.

6.4 The key aim, in any strategy for the future of Thorpe Hall must be to retain the hall, its outbuildings, formal gardens and parkland within the same long-term ownership. The fragmentation of the estate would be exceptionally damaging to the significance of the building and its grounds.

6.5 The square plan form of the hall and its outstanding architectural quality means that physical extensions to the building itself are inconceivable.

6.6 Internal alterations to the interior of the building need to be extremely carefully considered. Alterations which blur the impression of the original plan form must be avoided. The subdivision

or any other disfiguring alteration to the rooms with fine architectural ornamentation will similarly be unacceptable. Even modest works, such as changes to services and fire protection measures will need to be very carefully considered in rooms of high and very high quality or where they affect ornamental features in rooms of lesser significance.

6.7 There may be some scope for greater intervention on the second and third floors (beyond the stair core) though again the plan form must be respected and important features preserved.

6.8 The sensitivity of the interior of the Hall means that any future new or modified use needs to be carefully considered to ensure that issues such as compliance with Building and other Regulations in terms of such issues as noise insulation, energy efficiency, fire safety or disabled access are compatible with the preservation of the key features of the building. Whilst the Building Regulations in particular offer scope for flexibility, it is recommended that early consultation with the Building Control Surveyors takes place. Uses which require high levels of intervention into the historic fabric should be avoided.

6.9 The exterior of the west wing, although lower in terms of the architectural hierarchy of buildings on site than the hall itself, is nevertheless of very high quality and its external appearance must be maintained. The interior has been more substantially altered however and although there are elements of the original plan form and architectural features which must be protected, there is considerable scope for sensitive alteration to adapt the building to new needs.

6.10 The outbuilding range is lower down the hierarchical range though the materials and external form still respect those of the hall and west wing. The interiors are of lesser significance and offer scope for sensitive modification.

6.11 Originally there was a south wing, of which only the entrance feature remains as a resited garden feature. There may be some scope for the reinstatement of such a wing, subject to careful analysis of the impact of such a proposal on the C19 garden area which took its place and the impact on wider views of the Hall and west wing. Close liaison with the statutory authorities would be needed to gauge the acceptability of any such proposals.

6.12 An important aspect of the Hall's character is its siting within a walled enclosure which contained the formal and kitchen gardens, around which the 'wilder' parkland landscape sat. The north, south and east gardens are exceptionally important to the setting and key views of the hall as well as being important for the garden features which they contain. The north-west garden is less significant however. It has undergone successive alterations and today contains a mixture of probably early C20 orchard trees (together with one earlier specimen tree and two other quite mature self-set trees) and the track and buildings of the model railway. As this garden contains few if any garden features and buildings, there is some scope for either garden restoration or new buildings associated with the west wing. It is important however that any such building does not obscure views of the west wing from within the parkland and allows sufficient space for the West Wing to 'breathe' on its northern elevation. Any building elements higher than single storey would need to be located to the west beyond the west wing.

6.13 The Victorian alterations to the gardens included the provision of a large kitchen garden outside the walled enclosure. In recent years this garden was run as a commercial nursery and there are relatively few features surviving which date back further than the early C20. This site therefore offers some scope for garden restoration or new building. However it is separated by some distance from the more formal parts of the Hall and it is therefore difficult to conceive how a building here could be used in conjunction with the other buildings and maintain the Estate in single ownership. The height of any building here would need to be carefully considered to avoid dominating views of the Hall and its outbuildings (including the lodge) when approaching along the western drive.

6.14 Development within the parkland is unlikely to be acceptable due to the open nature of the land and its importance to the setting of the Hall.

6.15 Policy HE9 of Planning Policy Statement 5 'Planning for the Historic Environment' contains within HE9.2 the advice that local authorities should refuse consent for works causing 'substantial harm to or total loss of significance' unless (amongst other things) the harm or loss 'is necessary in order to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss'. HE9.4 states that where the harm or loss is less than substantial, then local authorities should 'weigh the public benefit of the proposal (for example that it helps to secure the optimal viable use of the heritage

asset in the interests of its long-term conservation) against that harm. It also comments that the greater the harm, the greater the justification needed.

6.16 The importance of retaining the whole of the Thorpe Hall Estate in single ownership must be considered to be a substantial public benefit. However there are other potential 'compensatory' works which could help improve the significance of other heritage assets on the site and represent public benefits helping to outweigh any impact on the significance of the hall, its gardens, parkland or other structures. These would include:-

- ➡ Restoring the west gate lodge and finding an appropriate new use for the building.
- ➡ Restoring the garden walls, particularly the shored eastern wall of the north-west garden.
- ➡ Reinstating lost landscape and garden features.
- ➡ Appropriately managing the gardens and wider parkland including the surrounding drystone walls.
- ➡ Managing car parking in a way which does not intrude into the parkland setting.
- ➡ Restoring any internal features of the hall which have been subject to minor damage (eg water damage to plasterwork).
- ➡ Drawing up a medium to long-term conservation / management plan to guide maintenance issues in the Hall and gardens.

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APPENDIX A

Historic plans of gardens

The following plans show the development of the gardens from c.1650 onwards. They are extracts from the 'Second Report on the development of Thorpe Hall Gardens' (September 1986) by the Thorpe Hall Working Party.

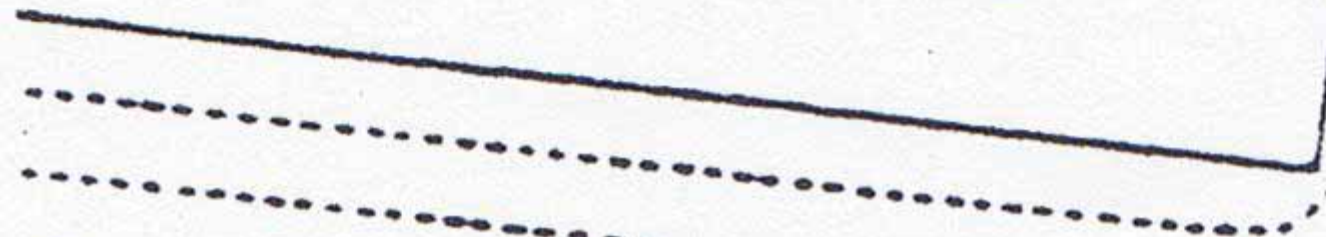
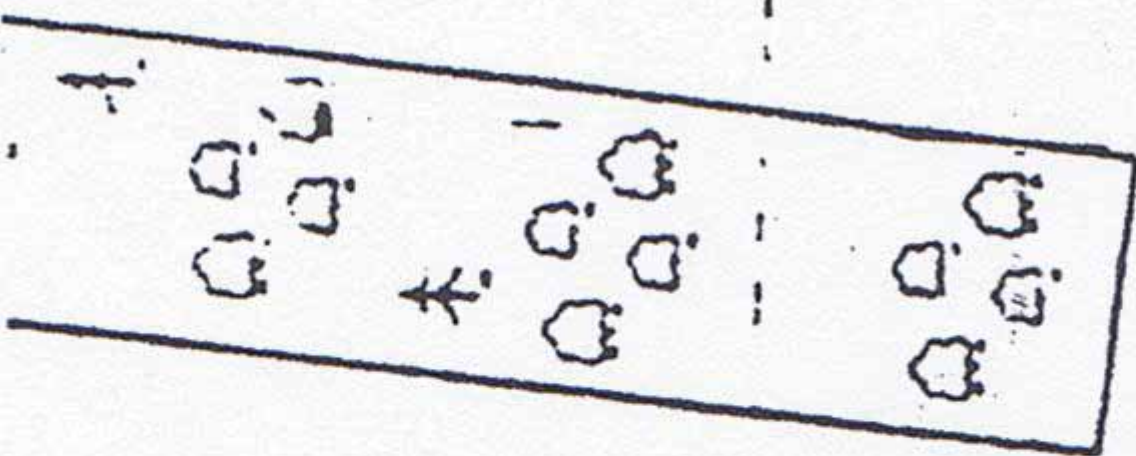
- ➡ Plan 1: Gardens circa 1650
- ➡ Plan 2: Gardens circa 1780
- ➡ Plan 3: Gardens circa 1935
- ➡ Plan 4: Gardens circa 1935

** Please note that they do not show an accurate representation of the buildings.*

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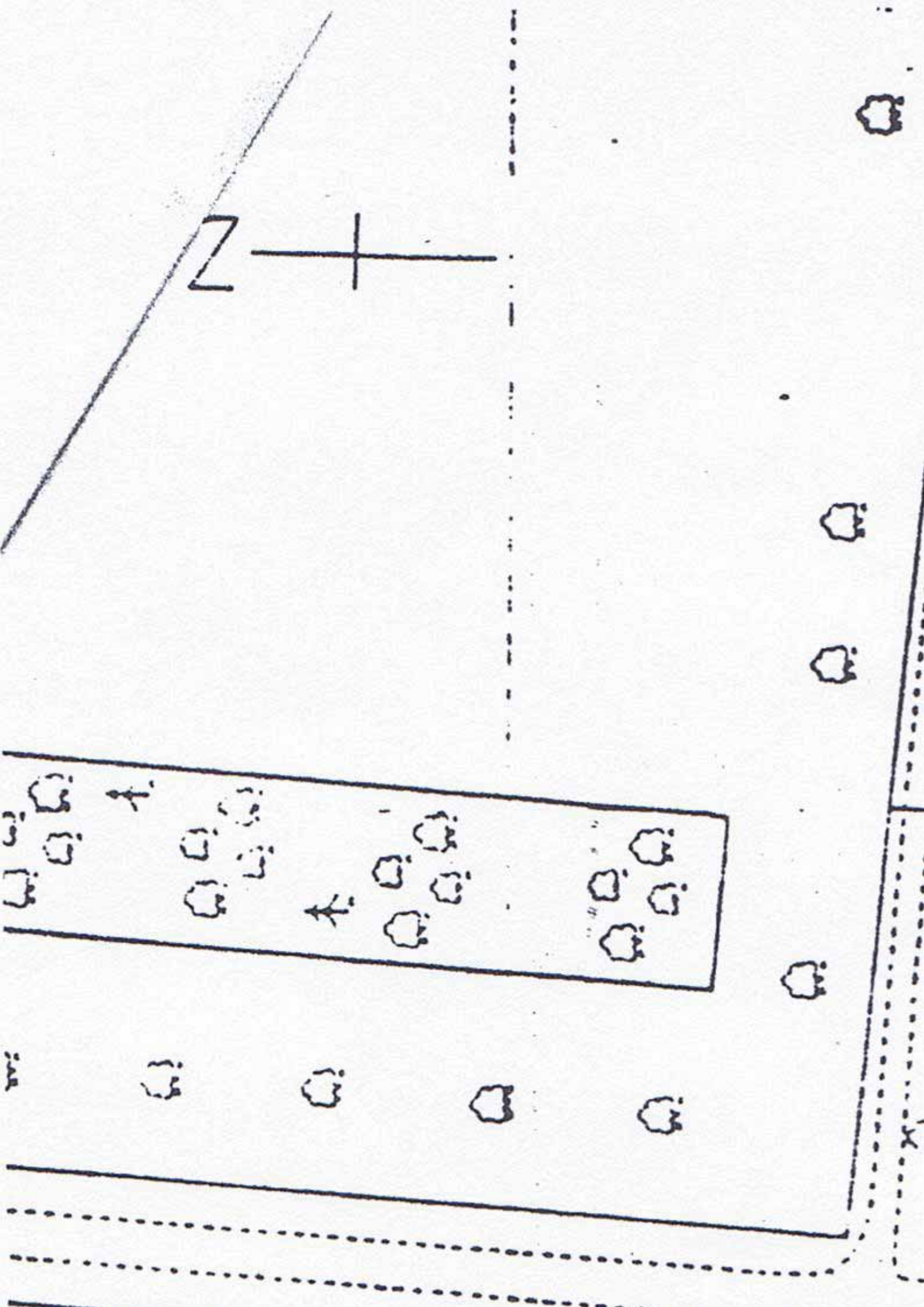
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