Egerton Lea Consultancy Ltd

Witton Park, Blackburn
Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment
Witton Park, Blackburn
Project No 0123

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SUMMARY

In May 2009 Egerton Lea Consultancy Ltd undertook a desk-based study of the site of Witton House in Blackburn to assess the likely significance and extent of the remains of Witton House against the possible impact of the development of a children’s adventure playground. The site of the house lies in Witton Country Park, which formed the original landscape park and grounds for the house. The park has a variety of uses including sports grounds, landscape park, woodland and farmland.

The house and park were built in 1800 by the Fielden family, one of Blackburn’s most significant and wealthy local families. The house and grounds were bought by Blackburn Corporation in 1946, and the house was eventually demolished in 1952, apart from a range of service buildings which now form part of a visitor centre. The platform on which the house was built and its foundations are still clearly visible, and it appears that most of the house was simply levelled. In the woodland on the north side of the house, some masonry still stands above ground where the house was built into the hillside. Garden features associated with the house which still survive are the stone steps on the garden terraces surrounding the house, the terraced walks, though now overgrown, and the original carriage drive. Documents in the Lancashire Record Office in Preston provided details of the house layout and the functions of its many rooms.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................... i
Summary .................................................................................................................. ii
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
2. Assessment methodology .................................................................................... 2
3. Designated status ............................................................................................... 2
4. Summary history of Witton and Witton Park .................................................... 3
5. Witton Park and the Fielden family ..................................................................... 6
6. The development of Witton Park ....................................................................... 8
7. The historical significance of Corporation Park ............................................... 6
8. The impact of the proposal on the historic character of Corporation Park ....... 7
9. Conclusion and recommendations .................................................................... 15
Bibliography ............................................................................................................ 17

Figures
1. Witton Park, the modern country park
2. The Location of the historic farms and Witton Park house
3. Witton Park and its service buildings in 1894
4. The service buildings

Photographs
1. The site of Witton Park house
2. Witton Park house on an early 19th century print
3. Ground floor plan of Witton Park in 1859
4. First, or chamber, floor plan of Witton Park in 1859
5. Sketch plan of ground floor, c 1890
6. Chamber floor plan of Witton Park c 1895
7. The foundations of the poultry house and piggeries
8. The wall to the kitchen garden
9. The service road with well-preserved setts
10. The main carriage drive with the base to ornamental urns
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITE OF WITTON HOUSE IN WITTON PARK, BLACKBURN

“Witton Park, the seat of Joseph Fielden, Esq., is an elegant stone mansion, commanding a delightful view of the vales of Ribble and Darwen”¹

1. Introduction

1.1 Witton Park is a modern country park on the western edge of Blackburn. The park was established on land which had formed the Witton Estate in the 19th century, and which Blackburn Corporation acquired in 1946. The estate was designated a country park in 1973.² The park covers a little less than 200 hectares (485 acres) and occupies a large area on the western boundary of the town between Preston Old Road to the south and Billinge End Road to the north. These two roads formed the original northern and southern boundaries of the estate, with Buncer Lane forming the eastern edge. The western part of the park includes farmland that lay outside the landscaped grounds of Witton Park mansion.

1.2 The site of the mansion house is a cleared area of lightly vegetated open ground, with some brick foundations visible at ground level. The site is largely surrounded by trees, the remnants of landscape planting but also including recently occurring woodland, derived from natural regeneration. On the north of the house, set into the hillside, some structural remains survive above ground. The garden terraces surrounding the house survive as grassed areas connected by shallow stone steps. Some of the service buildings, which lie just over 100m to the north east of the house, have also been demolished, though the stable block is now used as a visitor centre and some of the greenhouses and walled garden are still in use.

Plate 1. The site of Witton Park house

¹ Clarke 1830, 186
² www.blackburn.gov.uk, details on the modern park are taken from the Witton Country Park page of the local authority website
2. Assessment methodology

2.1 The overall impact of the development proposal was assessed in relation to its direct and indirect potential impacts on any heritage assets and its impact on the historic character of the area.

2.2 The baseline data was collected from a variety of sources. In addition to published sources, the Lancashire Historic Environment Record was consulted, research was undertaken at the Lancashire Record Office (LRO) in Preston and a site inspection was made. The Fielden collection if the LRO contains a number of plans, maps and other documents relevant to the history and development of Witton House. Unfortunately, the collection is not well catalogued, and it is possible that there are other relevant documents that were not uncovered during the course of this assessment. For example, an 1859 plan of Witton Park house was catalogued, but not the 1886 plan of service buildings which was stored with it. Some documents were very fragile, in particular an 1890s plan of the first floor of the house which requires conservation before it can be produced again, and others are missing. Initially it had been intended to visit Blackburn Library, but after visiting the Lancashire Record Office this was no longer considered necessary for the purposes of assessing the impact of the development proposals. Secondary sources relevant to the history of Witton Park and this area of Blackburn were consulted along with primary sources directly relating to the history and development of Witton Park.

3. Designated status

3.1 The park is a modern country park, even though it is based on the landscape park to Witton House. It is not registered by English Heritage as a Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest. The original extent and design of the park has been altered by the addition of sporting facilities to the south of the site of the house and by the development of a school complex within the eastern perimeter. The park was been credited with the Civic Trust's prestigious Green Flag Award in 2003, which it still retains.

3.2 There is only one designated structure within the environs of the park, which is the site of Witton Hall, a scheduled monument. The scheduled monument is owned by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council but is not managed as part of the public park. It is managed by the authority's Property Management Group along with the adjacent allotments. At present, there is no public access to the hall, even though it lies on the

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3 LRO DDFd 11/107a
4 LRO DDFd 11/405
5 LRO DDFd 11/379
6 www.greenflagaward.org.uk/winners; Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council 2007, 3
7 Scheduled monument number 34981; LHER PRN 982
edge of the country park. It is considered to be a monument at high risk by English Heritage.

3.3 In addition, there are 10 features of archaeological or historic interest within the park’s area that are noted on the Lancashire Historic Environment Record (LHER). These are:

- PRN 970 Coo Hill (SD 67400 28870)
- PRN 6536 Billinge Hill quarry (SD 67200 28970)
- PRN 6546 Witton Park, reservoir (SD 67667 29150)
- PRN 6547 Well (SD 67465 29051)
- PRN 14464 Lodge (SD 67334 29035)
- PRN 14465 Footbridge (SD 67434 29153)
- PRN 28201 Trackway
- PRN 28230 Pleasington, weir
- PRN 28231 Pleasington, weir
- PRN 31184 Witton House

4. Summary history of Witton and Witton Park

4.1 The origins of the name Witton are uncertain. It is a fairly common place-name with Old English origins and can have various meanings. Most commonly, it can derive from the elements *wudu* (or *widu*) + *tūn*, meaning the settlement in or by a wood and often with specific woodland functions.\(^8\) It can also derive from *wīc* + *tūn*, meaning a settlement with salt works or farmstead near an older Romano-British settlement.\(^9\) The second derivation can be dismissed, and the first is considered unlikely as there is no evidence for significant areas of ancient woodland in Witton. The woodland on Billinge Hill was planted as part of the landscaping associated with Witton Park. In this instance, the name is thought to have derived from a personal name *Witta*, meaning Witta’s settlement.\(^10\)

4.2 Witton was a medieval township within the parish of Blackburn. The township was small, around 283 hectares,\(^11\) roughly triangular in form and lay between the townships of Pleasington and Blackburn. The northern end was marked by the course of the Arley Brook, and its western boundary ran south along what is now a public right of way known as Killiard Lane, as far as the River Darwen which is followed approximately by the southern boundary. The township boundary turns north at a southward bend in the river and runs north to meet the River Blackwater. The eastern boundary roughly follows Buncer Lane to the north of Billinge Hill and then skirts to the west of Billinge Scar to meet the Arley Brook.

\(^8\) Ekwall 1960, 528; Gelling 1984, 227
\(^9\) Mills 1991, 366
\(^10\) Ekwall 1922, 74
\(^11\) It was originally 700 acres, but 125 acres were removed to be added to the municipal borough and civil parish of Blackburn in 1877, reducing the township to 575 acres, or just over 232 hectares; Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 263
4.3 Most of the area of the ancient township now lies within Witton Park, which was enclosed out of a substantial area of the township when Witton House was built at the beginning of the 19th century. Medieval settlement within Witton township appears to have been entirely rural, mainly comprising a few farms, but perhaps with a small nucleation of properties eventually growing up around Witton Stocks in the south-east corner of the township. Witton Stocks was so-called apparently because this was the location of the public stocks.12 Medieval documents record a number of tenements, or property holdings, from the later medieval period onwards, but there seem to have been only three principal farms.

4.4 Witton Eyes lay on the southern edge of the township between the Rivers Blackwater and Darwen. Its name probably derives from its location between the two rivers, as Eyes, or Ees means island, land on the edge of the marsh, or well-watered land.13 This farm is first documented in 1557, when it was held by John Cowburne, but as the Cowburnes were already in possession of an estate in Witton by 1404, it is likely that this was also Witton Eyes.14

4.5 The second major farm holding was Coo Hill, which definitely had medieval origins. It was known to have been part of the Witton manor estate when it was held by the Holden family in 1387. Records show several Holdens in possession of lands in Witton throughout the 16th century, including Thomas Holden who died in possession of Coohyll in Witton in 1591.15 One Thomas Holden held the farm in 1617, but by 1650 his son was a freeholder.16 The name Coo Hill is simply derived from a dialect word, meaning Cow Hill.17 It later became part of the estate which was enclosed to form the landscape park to Witton House. Following the creation of Witton Park as a country park, the eastern section of the estate, including Coo Hill, was separated and developed as a school and the farm itself has been demolished.

4.6 The principal farm in the township was Witton Hall (SD 6641 2726), which was referred to in various documents as the capital messuage, or chief holding of the manor. The hall lay in the southern part of the township, on the north side of the road from Preston to Blackburn. It was probably the original manor house, but the subsequent descent of the hall and the manor became separate. The owners of the manor were the de Lacy family, who were lords of the Honor of Clitheroe, and who granted Witton to Hugh, son of Leofwin, and whose nephew, Adam de Billington, held the

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12 Abram 1877, 755
13 From the Old English word ēg or ēeg; Mills 1991, 381
14 Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 265
15 Abram 1877, 760
16 Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 265
17 Ekwall 1922, 74
manor in 1242-3.\(^{18}\) In 1288 the manor passed to the de Chadderton family, and it was around this time that the hall and the manor appears to have become separated when Witton Hall was passed to Adam de Haldeley, who held it of the de Lacy family directly. The manor remained in the hands of the Chadderton family until 1357, when it passed to the de Radcliffe family through an heiress. Following another female heir, the manor later passed to the Standish family who held it until 1680 when it passed to Thomas Greenfield. Through his daughter, Martha, it came into the hands of the Reverend John Holme, Vicar of Blackburn, and his son passed it on to trustees for sale in the later 18\(^{th}\) century.

4.7 In 1322 Witton Hall was given to Richard de Radcliffe, Vicar of Bury, but by 1345 the hall had been passed on to the Vicars of Whalley and Blackburn, who gave it to the Abbot and convent of Whalley in 1347. Following the Dissolution of the monasteries, the hall was sold twice in 1544, ending up in the hands of Geoffrey Astley and his son William. The later ownership history of the hall is uncertain but it remained with the Astley family until the reign of George III in the mid-18\(^{th}\) century when their estates were broken up and dispersed.\(^{19}\) Joseph Fielden bought the hall in 1788. It has been suggested\(^{20}\) that he bought the hall from the Holme family, in which case the hall and the manor of Witton would have been reunited under the same ownership in the 18\(^{th}\) century.

Plate 2. Witton Park house on an print from the early 19\(^{th}\) century. The house probably looks as it was built in 1800, with the original simple portico (www.cottontown.org)

\(^{18}\) The details of the history of the manor and the hall are taken from the account given in Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 264-5, or as otherwise referenced

\(^{19}\) Abram 1877, 577-8; Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 265

\(^{20}\) Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 265
5. **Witton Park House and the Fielden family**

5.1 One of the earliest documentary references to the Fielden family is in the early 16th century when Henry Fielden was made a trustee for lands granted for a chantry chapel in Blackburn church.21 The family were considered yeomen, that is well-to-do farmers, but not gentry, but by the early 18th century, when Henry Fielden married Elizabeth Sudell, he was styled a gentleman.22 By this date, the Fieldens were well-established members of Blackburn’s merchant class, having made their fortune from the cotton trade.23 Henry Fielden was a member of the new elite of Blackburn society, and this is reflected in his acquisition of the manor of Blackburn in 1721, along with two other merchants, William Baldwin and William Sudell, although he soon bought out the others24 The Fielden family owned large areas of land throughout the borough of Blackburn, and played a key role in the growth of the town by providing land for development and donating land for major Blackburn landmarks and institutions such as Corporation Park, the Technical College and Grammar School.25

5.2 The purchase of the manor of Witton and Witton Hall provided land on which Henry Fielden’s grandson, also called Henry, could build a mansion house befitting his status as one of Blackburn’s most influential and wealthy citizens. The house was built in 1800, described as of freestone in the Grecian style.26 Witton Old Hall was then advertised to let as Witton Hall Milk Farm in 1803-4,27 but it had fallen into disuse and was in ruins by 1836.28 The park was enclosed from the surrounding land, including the farm of Coo Hill, and stretched from the Preston to Blackburn road in the south to the foot of Billinge Hill in the north. Buncer Lane forms the eastern boundary, while the west side is marked by the footpath known as Killiard Lane. A footpath, which ran from Witton Stocks to Pleasington via Witton Hall, was diverted in 1819 to avoid the newly enclosed park.29

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21 Abram 1877, 756
22 Abram 1877, 757
23 Beattie 1992, 29
24 Beattie 1992, 29
25 Beattie 1992, 31
26 Durham 1861, 28
27 Scheduling description taken from [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)
28 Baines 1836, 359
29 LRO DDFd 11/5 plan of foot path
5.3 The Fieldens continued to be a major influence in the town throughout the 19th century, and Joseph Fielden and his son Henry Master Fielden both served as MPs for Blackburn in the 19th century, and Joseph was also High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1818. Joseph was the son of Henry, the builder of Witton House, and it was under him that various alterations were made to the property. Henry Master Fielden was Joseph’s eldest son, but he died five years after his father in 1875, leaving no male heirs, so the estate went to his brother Randle Joseph Fielden. Randle was succeeded by his son, Captain James Hawley Gilbert Fielden, later Major General Fielden. Following the death of Major General Fielden in 1895, the family seldom used the house.

30 Abram 1877, 758; Durham 1861, 56 and 66
31 Abram 1877, 759
32 Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 265
33 www.cottontown.org
6. **The Development of Witton Park**

6.1 Witton House was a grand house built on the scale of a country mansion. In 1830, it was said, ‘the seat of Joseph Fielden, Esq., is an elegant stone mansion, commanding a delightful view of the vales of Ribble and Darwen’. In 1855, it was again described as ‘an elegant stone mansion, surrounded by a park of considerable extent’. There are no plans available of the house as it was built, but the map of the proposed footpath diversion of 1819 shows the outline of the main part of the house, and its footprint appears to be the same as it was later in the 19th century. An early 19th century lithograph shows the house was built in the classical style, with an ashlar façade. It had a segmental, two-storey bay on the south side, with a simple segmental Doric-columned portico on the east side, fronting on to the drive which swept up through the park from the Blackburn to Preston road. The lithograph shows trees to the north of the house, where there were later buildings but this may be artistic licence rather than a true depiction of the house’s immediate surroundings as it is clear that the intention was to give the impression of a rural idyll. The house was sited on an elevation to provide splendid views across the park.

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Plate 4. First, or chamber, floor plan of Witton Park, 1859 (LRO DDFd 11/107a)

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34 Clarke 1830, 186  
35 Mannex 1855, 305  
36 [www.cottontown.org](http://www.cottontown.org)
and surrounding countryside. The views were enhanced by plantations in the park, and on Billinge Hill to the rear of the house.37

6.2 Alterations were undertaken in the time of Joseph Fielden, and in 1859 Samuel Patterson of Blackburn was asked to provide plans for alterations to the house.38 Features marked in red on the plans appear to show only minor alterations, but later photographs show other more extensive work was carried out at a later date, including the construction of the glazed central clerestory to provide light for the central grand staircase,39 as well as a new, T-shaped, partly glazed portico with balustrade and pediment at roof level. The new balustrade, portico and pediment can be seen in some detail on a photograph of 1888, taken during a visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales.40 Other photographs of the era show the glazed clerestory on the roof.41 The porch was again replaced, by a more elaborate version in the very late 19th or early 20th century. This porch was two-storey, square in plan, enclosed and glazed with a portico above. The pediment at roof level was replaced with another built out to roof the first storey portico.

6.3 The plans of 185942 and others from the 1890s43 provide detail of the internal layout of the house at ground floor and first floor level, known as the chamber floor. The plans are supplemented by an inventory of the household contents drawn up in 1870, presumably done following the death of Joseph Fielden. The inventory described the household contents room by room, and this can be matched to the plans of the house:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ground Floor</th>
<th>Eight bedrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vestibule and hall</td>
<td>Chamber maid’s closet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairs and landing</td>
<td>Top stairs and landing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining room</td>
<td>Top floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloak room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby to back entrance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portico to billiard room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler’s pantry with bedroom adjoining</td>
<td>Back entrance and passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeper’s room</td>
<td>Larder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store room</td>
<td>Servant’s hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Floor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four front bedrooms, three dressing rooms</td>
<td>Small kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak bedroom with dressing room</td>
<td>Neat store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning room</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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37 Blackburn Times 22nd March 1930, www.cottontown.org
38 LRO DDFd 11/107a
39 Robinson 1991, 253
40 www.cottontown.org
41 www.cottontown.org
42 LRO DDFd 11/107a
43 LRO DDFd 11/406 and DDFd 11/498
6.4 **Ground Floor.** The portico led onto a wide entrance hall with the main staircase. To the left was the drawing room, which the plan of 1859 shows was divided by fireplaces into the front and bow drawing rooms (the latter so-named because of the bow window). To the right of the hall was the dining room. In the 1890s there were plans to have been replace or supplement this with a second dining room to the north, adjacent to the service rooms (see below). On the west side of the house was the library, a study with a safe, and the Oak room. This last room may be the cloak room named on the 1870 inventory as it is the smallest room in the main part of the house and is next to the service quarters. The only plan of the north, rear section of the house is a tracing of a plan dated to around 1890.45 A ground floor plan dated 189346 was missing from the collection. This area includes rooms, such as the housekeeper’s room, Butler’s pantry and bedroom, and store room. A billiard room is shown on the later plan, and was linked to the main house by a portico in 1870. Room functions may have changed between 1870 and the 1890s, but there were clearly additions to this part of the house between

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lavatory</th>
<th>Bake house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stairs landing and closet to back bedrooms</td>
<td>Laundry and room adjoining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeper’s room</td>
<td>Wash house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four back bedrooms</td>
<td>Brew house with room adjoining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage, closet and back landing</td>
<td>Second room adjoining with room over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School room</td>
<td>Cellars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage and landing to servant’s bedrooms</td>
<td>Yard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plate 5. Sketch plan of ground floor, c.1890 showing alterations to the front of the house (bottom of plan) which were not implemented (LRO DDFd 11/498)

44 LRO DDFd 11/498
45 LRO DDFd 11/498
46 LRO DDFd 11/379
these dates. A specification for a new larder in 1883\textsuperscript{47} probably relates to the room marked as a pantry adjacent to the billiard room in the 1890s. This was a new build that infilled the space between the billiard room and the main house, which by 1890 also included a ground floor extension with a lavatory and corridor. The 1890s ground floor plan appears to show proposals that were not fully implemented, particularly the dining room and housekeeper’s room. The dining room was a bay window extension to an existing room, probably the original housekeeper’s room, with a new housekeeper’s room in a proposed adjacent bay. Late 19\textsuperscript{th} century photographs show this plan was never implemented.\textsuperscript{48} The location of the housekeeper’s and butler’s quarters next to the main part of the house reflected the status and importance of these two figures in the running of a major household, and that they were considered separate from the other servants. The service quarters were ranged around the courtyard shown on the plans, though the other rooms are not named, apart from a maid’s bedroom on the west side at first floor level.\textsuperscript{49}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate6.png}
\caption{Chamber floor plan of Witton Park dated c 1895. This shows the arrangements of rooms to the rear of the house (LRO DDFd 11/405)}
\end{figure}

6.5 \textit{First Floor}. This was also known as the chamber floor, as it was where the main bedrooms were situated. In the main part of the house, the 1870

\textsuperscript{47} LRO DDFd 8/2
\textsuperscript{48} www.cottontown.org
\textsuperscript{49} LRO DDFd 11/406
inventory lists four front bedrooms, all but one with its own dressing room, and the Oak bedroom with dressing room. The plans of 1859 and the 1890s show the same number of bedrooms, but different names are given. The bedroom with the bay was known as the Bow bedroom, with the Blue room to the west and the front bedroom to the east. On the north side of the house, Mr Fielden’s bedroom lay to the east and Mr Henry Fielden’s bedroom to the west. Mr Fielden was clearly Joseph Fielden and his would have been the master bedroom, and Henry Fielden was his son. All these bedrooms had dressing rooms, though by the 1890s, the dressing room to the master bedroom had become a bathroom. The lavatory and morning room listed in the inventory were actually in the rear part of the house, near rooms which were listed as bedrooms in the 1890s, one of which may have been the housekeeper’s bedroom in 1870. A total of four back bedrooms are listed in the inventory, with a passage leading to the school room, which may have been over the billiard room though this area is marked as two bedrooms in the 1890s. Adjacent was the Cyprus room which was built over the 1883 pantry. There is a passage and landing to the servant’s bedrooms, which presumably lay on the west side of the courtyard but, apart from a maid’s bedroom, are not shown on any plan.

6.6 **Servants’ accommodation.** There were eight servant’s bedrooms, plus a chambermaid’s closet. These must have lain to the back of the house, as photographs show the main part was only two storeys high. These may have been at ground level, as the inventory lists a top stairs and landing to three further bedrooms and a nursery, which must have been above the servants’ bedrooms, plus a landing to three servants’ back bedrooms. There was also a set of stairs to a room at the top of the house, presumably an attic, and these appear to be the stairs leading up from the passage next to Mr Henry Fielden’s dressing room in the main part of the house.

6.7 **Service quarters.** The inventory lists a larder, ‘neat room’ and servants’ hall, which are not shown on the plan, as well as the front kitchen and small kitchen, which were located at the front of the house in an extension on the east side. Cellars are also listed, though the only plan of a cellar is for a wine cellar, and
shows the arrangement of wine bins rather than the layout and location of the cellar itself.\textsuperscript{50} Other services included a dairy, laundry, wash house, bake house, brew house and adjoining rooms. It can be assumed that these lay within the buildings ranged around the courtyard, probably at ground or basement level. There is a copy of a plan of various outbuildings\textsuperscript{51} kept with the 1859 plan of the main part of the house, but it was drawn up later in 1886. It does not show any of the buildings listed in the inventory of 1870 but includes all the stables and coach houses, the houses of the gardeners, bailiff, gamekeeper and coachman, as well as showing the enclosed garden and pond, palm houses and greenhouses, as well as farm buildings such as the piggeries. The plan is schematic and does not locate the buildings within the layout of the park, but comparison with the 1890s Ordnance Survey map allows most of the structures to be identified. The foundations of many of these buildings can be traced on the ground, such as the piggeries, poultry houses and boiler house which can be seen in the woods to the north of the visitor centre. There is also an ice house, which survives to the south of the poultry and piggeries buildings but it is not shown on the plan. The stables and coach house are still standing, and in use as the visitor centre, as are the cart

\textsuperscript{50} LRO DDFd 11/645
\textsuperscript{51} LRO DDFd 11/107a
shed and the stanchions to the Dutch barn. The walled garden survives but has been filled with modern greenhouses. Other features also survive around the house and service quarters, such as the carriage drive, with the bases for ornamental urns on either side. The service track joining the service buildings to the servant’s quarters at the rear of the house also survives well, in places as a paved road with setts, along with retaining walls, pathways and steps in the woods between the service buildings and the house.

6.8 The Park. Some of the buildings shown on the plan of 1886 were sited away from the main complex of the house and service accommodation, including the east and south lodges, the bailiff’s cottage, the gamekeeper’s cottage and kennels. The two cottages and kennels appear to have been at Coo Hill, where there were also pheasantries, and they were probably located in the former farmhouse buildings. The site has been incorporated into the school grounds taken out from Witton Park. The east lodge is still extant on the eastern perimeter of the park next to Buncer Lane, but the south lodge, adjacent to the main entrance and car park, has been demolished. The former drive is now an access road into the park, and close to the south lodge, it crosses over the River Darwen by a bridge. The bridge was built in 1878 and the specification for the work detailed all aspects of the construction, including stone type and the quarry, the mortar mix, and design details.\textsuperscript{52} There are no plans of the park showing planting schemes or the layout of the garden, but a comparison of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Ordnance Survey maps with modern satellite photography\textsuperscript{53} shows that the planting scheme remains relatively unaltered, apart from to the south of the house and visitor centre. Here the construction of allotments, playing fields and sports facilities has led to the removal of ornamental landscaping. A reservoir, which is shown on 19\textsuperscript{th} century

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate10}
\caption{The main carriage drive to the house, with the bases to two ornamental urns}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{52} LRO DDFd 8/18
\textsuperscript{53} www.google.co.uk
maps,\textsuperscript{54} is still extant, and probably supplied water to the house. Likewise, a 19\textsuperscript{th} century well probably supplied Coo Hill.\textsuperscript{55} Other minor features which are shown on the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Ordnance Survey maps include a trackway, two weirs in the River Darwen and a footbridge over the river.\textsuperscript{56} The gardens around the house itself do not seem to have been particularly elaborate, and were restricted largely to simple terraces linked by steps, and walks through woodland planting, and these are still intact though not now planted up. The more formal area of walled garden with a large pond, situated on the east side of the walled vegetable garden, is also still intact and the pond is now used for fishing.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 The level of information available from the surviving plans of the house and other buildings is unusual and a more detailed study of the documents available might enable an accurate reconstruction of the arrangement of buildings of one of Blackburn’s most important 19\textsuperscript{th} century houses. Further work on the history, development and layout of the estate would complement information on the merchant houses of the town, particularly in the Church Street and King Street area, and assist an understanding of the relatively small group of influential Blackburn citizens who helped shape the development of Blackburn as an industrial town. Additionally, Witton Park was a major employer. It had a large domestic and estate staff, as evidenced by the details contained in the inventory of 1870 and the plans of house and service buildings, and it could be a valuable source of information on the life of a large section of the working classes in Blackburn who were not employed in industry.

7.2 Although very little of Witton Park house and its associated buildings survive intact, the footprint of the house and its layout, and the position and identity of its service buildings can be determined from the surviving documentary records. Most of these buildings were levelled when the house was demolished in 1952, but there are clear indications of good surviving below-ground archaeological evidence.

7.3 It is recommended that the site of the house and its associated service buildings are not disturbed other than for the purposes of archaeological research. Any work carried out in these areas should not compromise the physical context of the house, but should aim to enhance and interpret the site’s history and nature. There are two options for the proposed adventure playground:

- Site it away from the remains of the house and its associated service buildings

\textsuperscript{54} LHER PRN6546
\textsuperscript{55} LHER PRN6547
\textsuperscript{56} LHER PRN28201, PRN28230, PRN28231 and PRN 14465
• Site it within the footprint of the house but ensure that construction methods are used to preserve any below-ground remains. The playground should be sympathetic to the site and be designed in such a way as to help interpret the country mansion, possibly incorporating interpretation into its design. Consideration would also have to be given to the above-ground remains of the house.

7.4 At present, the site of the house is a waste ground, but given the documentary evidence and below-ground survival, there is very good potential for interpretation of the house and its estate. There is the potential for retrieving information through archaeological excavation, for example, along with a programme of archaeological recording work of the many walls, paths, roads, steps and other features, which would further enhance the understanding of the estate and how it worked, as well as informing any interpretation schemes. Such work could be undertaken through a community archaeology programme, with the help of a professional archaeological unit, similar to the community archaeology project undertaken at Mellor, near Stockport.57

57 www.mellorheritage.org.uk
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FIGURES
Figure 1. Witton Park, showing the boundaries of the modern country park and the location of the site of Witton Park house (www.blackburn.gov.uk)
Figure 2. The location of the historic farms of Coo Hill and Witton Hall, and the location of Witton Park house and its associated buildings. The extent of the landscape park is shown in purple.
Figure 3. Witton Park House, service buildings as shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1894. The terraces around the house can be seen, and the service wings ranged around a courtyard are on the north side of the main house.
Figure 4. A detail taken from the Ordnance Survey map of 1894 showing the functions of the various service buildings as taken from the 1886 plans (LRO DDFd 11/107a). The modern visitor centre is housed in the stable block, the cart sheds still stand but the walled garden has now been filled with modern greenhouses.