

M54 to M6 Link Road

TR010054

Volume 6

6.3 Environmental Statement

Appendices

**Appendix 6.5 Further information on
Hilton Hall, including photos from
Hilton Hall**

Regulation 5(2)(a)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

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Infrastructure Planning

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**M54 to M6 Link Road
Development Consent Order 202[]**

6.3 Environmental Statement Appendices

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Annex A: Photographs from viewpoints within Hilton Hall

1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Hilton Park is a non-designated park surrounding the post-medieval Hilton Hall (B2), which stands on or near the site of an earlier late medieval hall. The earlier structure and grounds was passed to the Vernon family in 1547 and the present residence was built by Henry Vernon (1663-1732) in the early 18th century. This report provides a detailed description of Hilton Hall's history from the 18th century to the present. It also includes a number of photographs in Annex A taken from the second and third floor windows of Hilton Hall looking towards the Scheme.

2 The 18th Century

- 2.1.1 Prior to the mid-18th century the park was largely an open landscape in this period, dotted with farm buildings, belts of trees and uninterrupted vistas.
- 2.1.2 Hilton Hall, the existing building at Hilton Park, is attributed to the architect Richard Trubshaw, based on the similarities between Hilton Park and Trubshaw's now demolished Emral Hall, Flintshire, and also the fact that Trubshaw worked for Henry Vernon at Hilton in 1743. The Vernons kept deer in the park during the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, during which time the park was re-landscaped.
- 2.1.3 At this time, a folly was erected on the estate in the form of a brick, hexagonal, embattled tower, known as Portobello Tower (B23). The tower was built to commemorate Admiral Vernon's capture of Portobello in 1739 (Ref 1 and 2). The folly was possibly also designed by Richard Trubshaw, and was built between 1739 and 1765 (Ref 1).
- 2.1.4 The existing design of the park is associated with the late 18th century landscape gardener, Humphry Repton, although it is not certain if he ever produced a design for the park. Repton (1752 - 1818) was an English landscape designer and the self-proclaimed successor of Capability Brown as an improver of grounds to the landed gentry of England. Repton's landscapes were not as large as those designed by Brown but were usually more thickly planted. Repton was influenced by the Picturesque movement, which was based on the appreciation of wild and dramatic landscapes (Ref 3). The Picturesque movement was based on an appreciation of scenery and a variety of dictated emotions that it provoked in the viewer (ibid). Picturesque landscapes used "irregular, craggy and rugged forms and textures and asymmetrical layouts in attractive views" (ibid). Repton advocated a gradual transition between house and grounds by introducing terraces, balustrades and steps, leading from the house to the surrounding parkland. Repton led the movement of the reinvention of floral displays in full view of the house that was most obvious in the garden terrace. This reinforced the separation of the house from the landscape park. Repton preferred to act as a consultant rather than carrying out the work himself. He avoided providing a detailed specification of plants and he focused on the broader effects that his landscapes aimed to achieve.
- 2.1.5 The Hilton Park 1796 Estate Map (refer to Figure 6.7 in Volume 2 of the Environmental Statement [TR010054/APP/6.2]) shows Hilton Hall and the associated Hilton Park. The park covers an extensive area around the Hall with a number of farm buildings being visible, as well as a number of trees, either in groups or dispersed. A moat surrounding the Hall can be seen, along with a walled garden to the north of the Hall.

3 The 19th Century

- 3.1.1 The Hilton Tithe Map (Figure 6.8 [TR010054/APP/6.2]), dated 1842, again shows Hilton Hall surrounded by a moat, with two lakes to the west (marked as Lower Pool on later maps) and what appears to be a similar walled garden to that shown on the 1796 Estate Map, although on a slightly different alignment and distance from the Hall.
- 3.1.2 A small structure to the north-west of the moat is visible on the approximate location of the existing Conservatory (B4), although it appears to be of rectangular shape rather than circular. The existing glass roofed conservatory dates to the early 19th century and was erected within Hilton Park, to the north-west of the Hall. The conservatory has a cast-iron and wooden frame and is arranged on a circular plan. A furnace below the main structure used to heat the conservatory to create an appropriate warm environment for the plants. The location of the conservatory outside of the walled garden, along with its ornate design, indicate its ornamental, rather than utilitarian, purpose that was intended to be seen from Hilton Hall and enjoyed as a summer house, within Hilton Park. Conservatories were designed at this time as a suitable place to cultivate and protect exotic fruits and delicate plants. Early examples were constructed away from the main house, while increasingly they started being attached to the main house in order to be used as a social space and improve accessibility. However, under the influence of the landscape movement, which favoured naturalistic grounds around the house rather than formally laid out gardens, they became freestanding and in the first decades of the 19th century they were characterised by elaborate architectural design and details. They were therefore landscape features located within the parkland that surrounded the main houses. A pool is also visible to the north of this building.
- 3.1.3 A number of farmsteads are located further south of the Hall, including Hilton Farm. There are belts of trees to the west of the Hall, providing screening from the fields and the road to Cannock further to the west (now the A460). Additional belts of trees are also shown along the northern boundary of the park, and along other boundaries. Additional trees, in groups or individually, are located around the Hall and dispersed within the park.
- 3.1.4 The First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS, 1884-86) map (Figure 6.9A and 6.9B [TR010054/APP/6.2]) shows only a few changes in the park. Additional alterations and enhancements in the park included the construction of the Coach House and stable block (B22), to the north-east of the Hall. Although these were built in the early 19th century they are not shown on the 1842 Tithe Map. At the same time as the stable block was added, the Hall was renovated when a third storey was added and the main entrance moved to the south-east of the Hall (Ref 4). On the First Edition OS map, The Conservatory (B4) is represented as a circular feature to the north-west of the Hall. The walled garden to the north of the Hall still exists, along with a number of outbuildings with glass roofs to the north and west of the garden. The two ponds (Lower Pool) to the west of the Hall are visible, as well as the small pond to the north of the Conservatory. Trees and plantations follow the patterns shown on the Tithe Map (Figure 6.8 [TR010054/APP/6.2]). However, it appears that more trees were added to the park by this date, enhancing existing groups.

- 3.1.5 The formal approach to the Hall was originally towards the southern face of the building, across the moat via a stone bridge and wrought iron gateway. This approach is recorded on the 1796 Estate Map and 1842 Tithe Map. The main vista from this entrance of the Hall was to the south, towards Portobello Tower, located on a small hill approximately half a mile from the Hall, surrounded by open parkland and belts of trees. This view was later narrowed to a grassed area surrounded by thick wooded groves in the mid-19th century.
- 3.1.6 By the mid-19th century the approaches to the Hall were from the east and west, although by the first edition OS map in 1882 this had changed to the west and north and led to the eastern side of the Hall. A porte cochère was added to the eastern entrance in the late 19th or early 20th century, and the Hall was extended to the north.

4 The 20th Century

- 4.1.1 The Second Edition OS Map (1902) (Figure 6.10A and 6.10B [TR010054/APP/6.2]) marks the area to the west of the Hall as 'The Shrubbery'. This area contains the Lower Pool (first depicted on the 1842 Tithe Map) and belts of trees that are shown on the Tithe Map extending from Hilton Lane in the north to Hilton Farm and beyond in the south. The Shrubbery was a distinctive feature of the mid- to late 18th and early 19th century landscape design. Ornamental shrubbery was generally used as an informal development of the "archaic wilderness" (Ref 3) and was used as a backdrop for flower gardens or as a feature in its own right, where space existed. Shrubberies in regency gardens were often employed to 'frame serpentine garden walks' which 'connected the garden more closely to the surrounding landscape' (Ref 3). The Lower Pool, the remains of the moat, and the smaller pond located to the north of the moat are also depicted on the 1902 OS map. The 19th century mapping shows walks along the woodland within the park, including within The Shrubbery. These are screened by tree planting, apart from on the bridge which crosses over the narrow part of the lakes, which would have led to episodic, but clear views towards the rear of the Hall.
- 4.1.2 It is not until aerial photographs dated to 1996 that the two lakes located between Lower Pool and the Hall are shown, indicating that these are modern additions and did not form part of the original design of the park.
- 4.1.3 The extent of the historic park is shown in green on Figure 6.3 [TR010054/APP/6.2] (Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER)). The historic park covers an extensive area around Hilton Hall and extends to the A460, to the west; beyond the M6, to the east; south of the M54, to the south; and up to Hilton Lane, to the north. Approximately one third of the former area of the park (to the south-west) is now covered by gravel pits. Modern development that has taken place within and around the park has affected its integrity in parts. This includes the construction of the M6, which runs down the eastern side of the park, and the M54 which crosses the southern part of the park. Changes in ownership have also affected the extent of the existing parkland. However, a number of historic features are still extant and the historical associations of features within the park survive. The north-western part of Hilton Park falls within the Featherstone Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ), as identified in the Historic Environment Assessments (HEAs) for South Staffordshire District. Section 3.1 (FSHECZ 1 – Hilton Park) of Appendix 2 – Coven, Essington and Featherstone HECZs¹, discusses the north-western part of the park that falls within this HECZ. The assessment identifies the Lower Belt, The Belt and The Shrubbery, which contains the Lower Pool (as marked on the Second Edition OS Map, Figure 6.10A and 6.10B, [TR010054/APP/6.2]), and states that the shelter belts and surviving inland trees are important components in understanding and appreciating Hilton Park.
- 4.1.4 The park can be separated into four distinctive areas: The Hall and area around the Hall that is surrounded by the moat, including the former kitchen gardens; the open parkland; the woodland; and agricultural land.

- 4.1.5 The Hall is the principal building within the park and the main focal point. The parkland was designed and laid out in order to provide an appropriate setting for the Hall. A number of outbuildings, including the stable block and the conservatory were added as service buildings for the Hall. The conservatory, apart from its utilitarian purpose, was also a design feature within the park, as was the Portobello Tower. The woodland area is concentrated around the northern, eastern and western edges of the park and contains a number of footpaths, recorded on historic mapping. Many of these footpaths offered walks through dense layers of trees with unexpected views of the parkland. A path ran through The Shrubbery roughly north-south and included a bridge across the pool. In the 18th and 19th centuries the bridge allowed for views of the Hall and gardens immediately to the north. However, additional planting in the late 19th and 20th century along the moat adjacent to the Hall and to the east of the path near Lower Pool limited any views of the Hall from this area apart from on the bridge itself. The current layout of the park allows no views between the Hall and the Shrubbery and Lower Pool due to the increased planting. Current views of the park from the Hall are dominated by bands of trees around the remains of the moat (Figure 6.5 and 6.6, [TR010054/APP/6.2]). See Annex A for photographs taken from viewpoints within the hall. Photos from the upper storeys of the Hall, in the south and west elevations, looking towards The Shrubbery and Lower Pool are dominated by trees within the park and include the moat in the foreground.
- 4.1.6 A sewage filter bed was constructed in the early 20th century and recorded on the 1923 OS map to the west of the Hall between the Conservatory and the Lower Pool. This was covered over by the creation of the fishponds in the late 20th century.
- 4.1.7 Agricultural land encompasses much of the southern and eastern portions of the park. Sections of the land had been used for agriculture throughout the post-medieval period when it was owned by the Vernon family and was mostly in hand, as recorded in the tithe records. During the late 19th and 20th century, parts of the park were being used for small-scale mining and gravel pits, particularly in the southern portion, away from the Hall. Much of the extant park is now used as agricultural land, in addition to the preserved gardens immediately surrounding the Hall.

5 References

- Ref 1 Cockin, T. (2000) *The Staffordshire Encyclopaedia: a secondary source index on the history of the old county of Stafford, celebrating its curiosities, peculiarities and legends*. Malthouse Press, Stoke-on-Trent.
- Ref 2 Tracy, N. (2004) *Sir Edward Vernon (1723-1794)*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, website accessed 6 December 2018.
- Ref 3 Rutherford, S. (2018) 'Hardy Plants and Plantings for Repton and Late Georgian Gardens (1780-1820)', Historic England Research Report Series 20-2018.
- Ref 4 Knott, C. A. (1989) 'A History of Hilton Hall' Tarmac PLC.
- Ref 5 Thompson, M and Borozdin-Bidnell, M. (2019) 'Georgian and Regency Conservatories: History, Design and Conservation' Swindon, Historic England.

Annex A: Photographs from viewpoints within Hilton Hall



Image 1: Location of photos from Hilton Hall towards the Scheme, south elevation



Image 2: Photo 1, third floor window, southernmost bay



Image 3: Photo 2, third floor, central bay



Image 4: Photo 3, second floor, southernmost bay



Image 5: Photo 4, second floor, central bay



Image 6: Location of photos from Hilton Hall towards the Scheme, south elevation



Image 7: Photo 5, western bay, second floor



Image 8: Photo 6, third floor, central bay



Image 9: Photo 7, second floor, central bay