

City of Edinburgh Council

Edinburgh
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

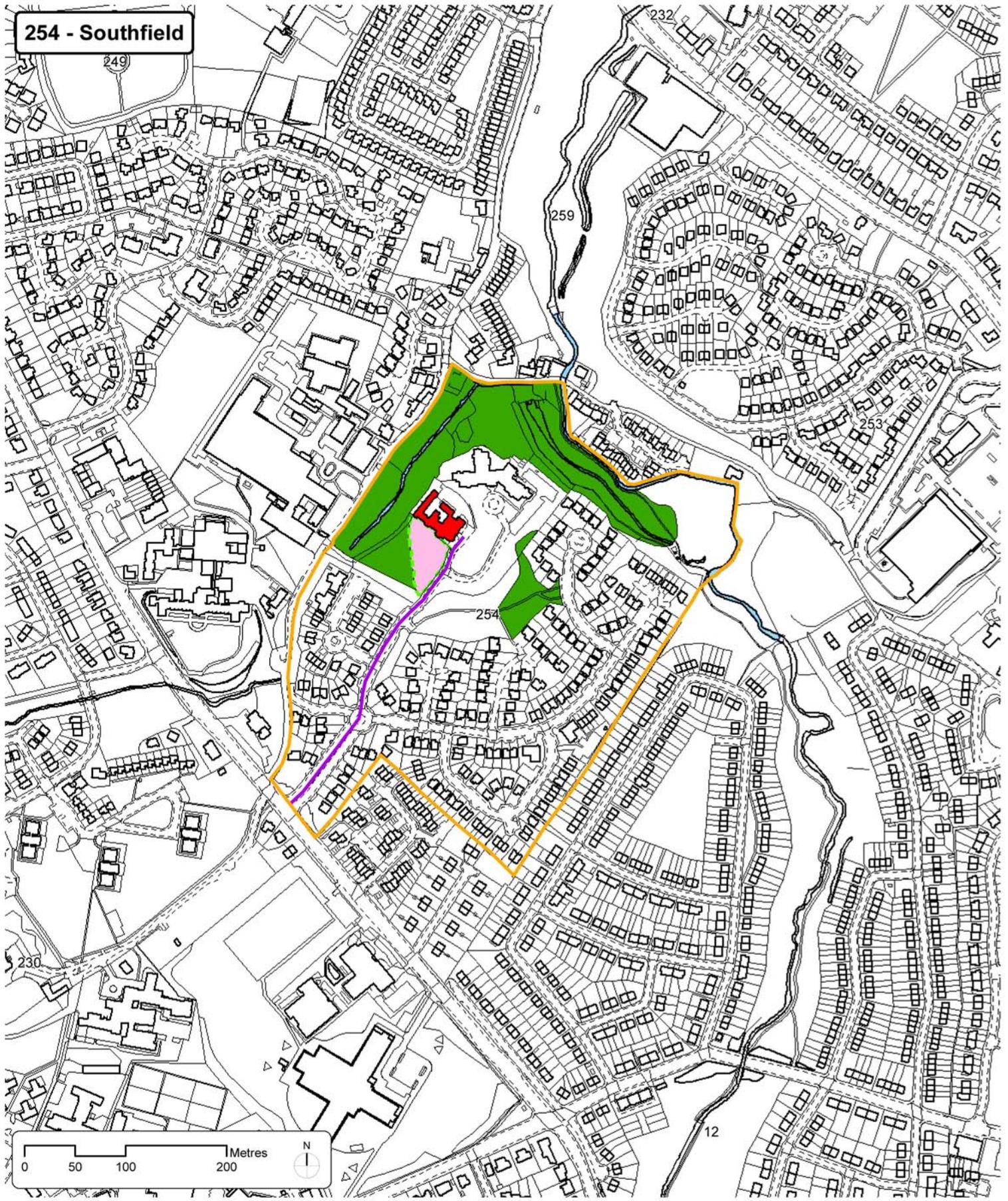
254 Southfield House

Consultants

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This report by Christopher Dingwall
Survey visit: November 2007

254 - Southfield



Key

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | Site boundary |  | Essential setting |
|  | Ruined buildings |  | Site of former house |
|  | Principal buildings |  | Main drive |
|  | Gardens |  | Principal views or vista |
|  | Water |  | Panoramic View |
|  | Woodlands |  | Walled Garden |
|  | Parkland | | |

EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

**SURVEY OF GARDENS AND
DESIGNED LANDSCAPES**

Peter McGowan
Associates with
Christopher Dingwall

254 Southfield House

Parish Liberton, later Edinburgh

NGR NT 282 691

NMRS No NT26NE 132

Owners Multiple – private, institutional and public open space

Designations

Listing Southfield House B

Local Nature Conservation Site (burn valleys on west and north-west boundaries of site)

Local Nature Reserve

Tree Preservation Orders

Heritage Trees

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

Although much of the site has been redeveloped in the last two decades, relict features from the designed landscape associated with Southfield House still make a significant contribution to the setting of the listed mansion house, and of the surrounding residential developments of Carnbee Avenue / Park / End. Walks on the west bank of Burdiehouse Burn, formerly within the grounds and accessed from the mansion house, now form part of Burdiehouse Burn Park.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

Southfield House is located just to the west of the B-class Lasswade Road and to the south of Ellen's Glen Road. The line of the former drive to the house, once with a lodge house on the Lasswade Road, is followed by Carnbee Avenue, part of a recent housing development (comprising Carnbee Avenue / Dell / Park / Crescent / End) that occupies much of the former parkland, together with the site of the walled garden. Access to the burnside walks in Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park, formerly within the designed landscape, is from Ellen's Glen Road, via Ellen's Glen Loan. There is pedestrian access between the two halves of Ellen's Glen Road, which is closed to vehicular traffic at NT 281 691. The surviving elements of the designed landscape are a small part of the core policy woodlands immediately around the house and the wooded valleys of the Burdiehouse and Stenhouse burns. Although the surviving woodland serves as a backdrop to neighbouring housing developments, the self-contained nature of the site means that inward and outward views are limited. Site area 13.5ha.



Southfield House and core grounds

Southfield House looking up
Carnbee Avenue



Front Elevation, Southfield
Sanatorium Colony c1933
(Lothian Health Services
Archive)



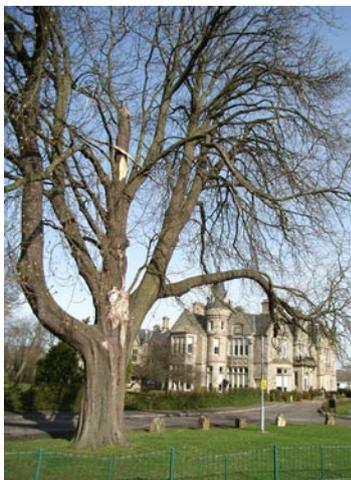
Maps and Graphic Evidence

The name *Stanehouse* and/or *Stenhouse* appears on maps from an early date, including Adair (1682) and Roy (c1750), without significant enclosure and planting. The first indication of planting and landscape improvement is seen on Laurie (1766), who recorded several tree-lined enclosures between Burdiehouse Burn and Stenhouse Burn. Knox (1816) also noted tree-lined fields, though some years before this date the Rev Thomas Whyte (1796) had described the estate as ‘... a scarce twenty acres inclosed completely and laid out with good taste. The house is neat and rendered exceedingly commodious by the addition lately made ... the gardens plantations and pleasure grounds merit the utmost applause ... all the improvements have been accomplished in a very few years’.

The *New Statistical Account* for the Parish of Liberton (1839) described Southfield as one of several estates in the parish as possessing ‘... admirable and most productive gardens with forcing houses’, presumably a reference to the walled garden seen on the Ordnance Survey (1855). This map shows a footpath leading from the mansion house around the south side of a tree-lined park to the wooded valley of the Burdiehouse Burn and the neighbouring mill-village of Stenhouse. The valley of the Stenhouse Burn to the north-west of the house is shown as lightly wooded and containing a mill-pond. Following the conversion of the estate to a *farm colony* for the treatment of patients with tuberculosis, photographs taken c1930 show the grounds being well-used for educational and recreational purposes. A photograph published in *The Scotsman* in 1960 shows the grounds still well cared for at that time, with mown lawns and neatly tended flower beds. A gradual decline in the condition of the grounds is apparent on successive aerial photographs from the 1970s onwards, with the walled garden trace remains of an ancient Cedar of Lebanon reputed to have stood in or near to the walled garden. Documentary sources could be used to trace the final break-up of the estate, following the closure of Southfield Hospital in 1998.



Core policy woodland with
paths



Old horse chestnut

COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

Core Policies

The mansion house stands within a much-reduced landscape, at the heart of the surrounding housing development. An area immediately around the mansion house defined by fences, signed as *private grounds*, is maintained as mown grass with a number of mature broadleaved trees and some ornamental shrubs. A small stand of non-native pines lies a short distance to the west of the mansion house. An area to the east of the house, with open access from the neighbouring housing and an informal path network, is essentially unmanaged woodland with some areas of rough grass, and a scrubby understorey of holly, laurel, rhododendron, elder with bramble and creeping ivy. Much of the surviving policy planting is of mixed broadleaved trees aged up to and around 150 years



– beech, copper beech, lime, sycamore, cherry etc. – with a scatter of younger conifers to the east of the house, including Western red cedar, Lawson cypress and an unidentified fir. Some self-seeding is evident, mostly of sycamore, yew and holly in the unmanaged areas.

Parkland

Almost nothing remains of the wider planting which once defined the surrounding parkland, now built over. Two mature trees are all that remains of the west avenue approach, which is seen on aerial photographs up to the 1990s.

Burdiehouse Burn Valley

A burnside walk on the west bank of the Burdiehouse Burn was formerly linked to the mansion house by a footpath, the line of which is now lost beneath new housing. The steep bank of the Burdiehouse Burn supports mixed broadleaved woodland that shows little sign of active management. The area was defined as a public open space in 1955, together with the neighbouring Hyvots Bank Valley Park, following the development of nearby housing schemes.

Stenhouse Burn Valley

Although there is no obvious trace of footpaths laid out within the valley of the Stenhouse Burn, the wooded dell falls within the designed landscape by virtue of its inclusion within the north boundary wall of the estate on the south side of Ellen's Glen Road. At present access to the valley is cut off at its west end by iron railings and at its east end by a concrete-post-and-wire-mesh fence, though there are breaches in the latter, allowing a degree of informal access. A few mature trees including beech, sycamore, elm, lime and oak survive within a neglected and degraded secondary woodland of mostly self-seeded trees, with a scattering of elder and yew beneath and a dense groundcover of ivy in places. Both Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed were noted. The burn and valley sides are rubbish-strewn and overgrown, with a number of fallen trees.

Core policies with old limes



New housing with pines from policy planting



Mature oak retained in new housing area



Carnbee Park and core policy woodland beyond

Stenhouse Burn valley



Abused tree

Nature Conservation

The steep-sided, wooded valley of the Burdiehouse Burn, which formerly marked the west edge of the designed landscape, together with that of the tributary Stenhouse Burn, which marked the north-west edge of the designed landscape, are designated as a Local Nature Conservation Site in the Finalised Edinburgh City Plan and is a Local Nature Reserve.

PUBLIC ACCESS

There is unrestricted public access from the Lasswade Road via Carnbee Avenue, along the line of the original avenue approach, to the core of the designed landscape surrounding Southfield House and the new Ellen's Glen House care home, where the entrance to the core pleasure grounds is marked by a low stone wall and rudimentary gate-piers, with a 1.5m wooden paling fence on one side and a 75cm railing fence on the other. Outwith this partially enclosed area of *private grounds*, there is unrestricted access to the remainder of the core policy woodland by way of drybound paths which lead into and through it from the new housing on Carnbee Avenue / Park / End. A former secondary access to the estate from Ellen's Glen Road, across the Stenhouse Burn, is blocked with iron railings. No direct access from the house to the valley of the Burdiehouse Burn remains. Access to Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park is via Ellen's Glen Loan, at the foot of which is a small car park and a sculptural feature in stone and wrought-iron marking the entrance to the local nature reserve. Although there is no formal access to the valley of the neighbouring Stenhouse Burn, breaches in the fence at its eastern end mean that there is a degree of informal access. Litter in the valley of the Stenhouse Burn – including wheelie-bins and a supermarket trolley – appear to be washed down the Stenhouse Burn or thrown over the boundary wall from Ellen's Glen Road.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

Although the core policy woodland provides a pleasant outlook and setting for Southfield House and serves to screen the surrounding housing, a number of the trees within it are over-mature and may be regarded as potentially hazardous, whether to pedestrians using the open space or to adjacent properties. Over-aged limes overhang part of Ellen's Glen Road. Trees and shrubs within the private grounds surrounding the house appear to be fairly well-managed. Outwith the private grounds, there is little sign of active woodland management, although numbered tags on one or two of the trees suggest that a survey has been undertaken in the past. Some vandalism and litter is evident. A woodland management plan, developed in partnership with the owners of surrounding properties, could do much to enhance the recreational and scenic value of this area, and to reduce the cumulative effects of neglect and vandalism.

Consideration might be given to more active management of woodland in the Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park, with a view to enhancing its value as a wildlife site and green corridor. Although fenced-off and consequently little visited, the wooded valley of Stenhouse Burn is significantly degraded. Even if the area remains closed off to the public, the clearance of rubbish, combined with more active management of the woodland, could enhance its value as a wildlife site. Consideration should be given to the treatment and eradication of Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed, both of which have the potential to become invasive.

ASSESSMENT

Overall

Little remains of the gardens and grounds of Southfield House, with the surviving elements fragmented and significantly degraded. The less intensively managed parts of the site, being the wooded valleys of the Burdiehouse Burn and Stenhouse Burn, have high local value as wildlife habitat, and as part of a green corridor in the south-east of the city. The surviving core policy woodland has some local value as the setting for a noteworthy house, and for the scenic and recreational benefits that it affords to the surrounding housing development.

Work of Art

None

Historical

Little

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

Little

Architectural

Some

Scenic

Little

Nature Conservation

High

Archaeology

None

Recreational

Some

Sources – Primary

Maps

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