3500HR

WENTWORTH CASTLE, STAINBOROUGH, BARNSLEY PROPOSED HANDRAILS.

DESIGN ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT



Birkett Cole Lowe
ARCHITECTS

HAWK WORKS,
105A, MARY STREET
SHEFFIELD
S2 4RT
T: 0114 275 7260
e: thepartners@birkettcolelowe.com

1.0 Context

1.1 The east range of Wentworth Castle was built between 1708 – 24 to the designs of the Prussian architect: Johann von Bodt for Thomas Wentworth: first Earl Strafford.

1.2 The south range was added between 1759 – 64 to the designs of William Wentworth: second Earl Strafford with the assistance of John Platt: master mason and Charles Ross: superintendent of the works. At this time the ends of the east range were altered to accommodate the junction of the two buildings. A matching pair of external staircases were added at each end of the range to lead to the higher ground of the south lawn which is the ground floor level of the south range. The ground levels at the north end of the east range were probably adjusted at this time to preserve a symmetrical composition.

2.0 Existing construction.

2.1 The steps are built of hard coarse-grained sandstone. They rise to a landing in front of a stone balustrade. The opening in the balustrade was, originally fitted with wrought iron gates. The staircase is bell shaped in plan and the widest bottom step is finished with a 'ram's horn' detail. The steps rise at a gradient of 1:2 (26.56°)

2.2 There is no documentary or physical evidence of handrails ever having been present.

3.0 The proposal.

3.1 The building and the gardens are variously owned and used by Northern College and by the Wentworth Castle Trust. The steps are in the ownership of the College. The south lawn is owned by the Trust who, in the summer months, let it for wedding receptions and similar events. The south steps are, therefore, used by the Trust's customers and their catering and marquee contractors to gain access to the lawn

3.2 The College has on legal advice, reached an out of court settlement with a wedding guest who stumbled on the steps. They have subsequently erected warning notices, but, on the advice of their insurers, now wish to erect a handrail to assist less agile people negotiating the steps.

3.3 The south flight of steps is much more heavily used. The nosings of most of the south flight of steps have been damaged and are chipped. One of the stones forming the fourth tread is much eroded and holds water which freezes in frosty weather. The repair of the nosings has been considered but funds are not, presently, available for this. The College do wish however, to repair the damaged tread. This will be done by planning the surface of the stone down to the level of the

bottom of the moulding forming the nosing and piecing-in a new tread of matching profile cut from a closely matching stone.

3.4 The design of the handrail has been discussed with the Trust, with English Heritage and with the L.P.A. It has been agreed that a simple metal rail of a style similar to 'estate railings' would be the most appropriate. Its simple nature would read as a 'modern intervention' – (which it is since the steps have been used for 250 years without a rail) but the reference to a simple traditional functional form will make it sit happily and unobtrusively. The proposed rail finishes at the bottom with a wreath that encircles and celebrates the ram's horn detail. At the top the rail returns parallel to the outside face of the piers of the balustrade and is fastened to this face. This arrangement leaves the opening clear and will not obstruct the future restoration of the iron gates: something that the Trust is keen to do if funding should become available.

3.5 All this is shown on the drawing 3500HR 01B

4.0 Access

The whole purpose of the proposal is to improve the access to the south lawn for ambulant disabled, elderly, timid or intoxicated people.