

BLENHEIM PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE REVISED MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017-2027

APPENDIX IV : PUBLIC CONSULTATION LOG

APPENDIX IV

CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This summary considers the process of public consultation, and does not include discussions and feedback from the members of the Steering Group. The public consultation exercise was conducted as follows:

A consultation document was prepared which covered four areas. These were:

1. an explanation of the SOUV, authenticity and integrity values, and the attributes of the site, together with an explanation that the purpose of the management plan was to protect and support these.
2. the achievements over the past ten years
3. the key challenges highlighted by the work on the current management plan
4. the priorities the management plan team have placed on meeting these challenges.

The public were invited to offer their thoughts and comments on:

1. what Blenheim means to them
2. did they agree or not that we have identified the key challenges
3. did they agree or not with the priorities we have set.

The consultation document was included on the Blenheim website - announced on the Home page with a direct link to the documents mentioned above, along with the ability to download the consultation document for further review (reproduced at the end of this document). The consultation period ran for 4 weeks from Friday 7th October up to and including Friday the 4th November.

An announcement of the process appeared in the Oxford Times just before the beginning of the consultation period and again half way through. The intention of this was to reach a wider audience - the Times has a circulation size of 12,683 along with an on-line presence which is 'free-to-view' (the story was also picked up by the sister paper Oxford Mail [circulation 16,569] which it ran on-line).

In order to alert as many people as possible who might have an interest in the management plan, all current and past 'annual pass' holders were included in an e-shot. This amounted to 211,159 people. A second email was sent half way through the consultation period.

Two letters were sent to the Clerks of the following: Woodstock Town Council; Bladon Parish Council; Combe Parish Council; Long Hanborough Parish Council; and Stonesfield Parish Council - representing the parishes that neighbour the park. The first letter, sent at the onset of the plan production, invited councillors to let us know their views on the content for the new plan, and to ask whether they had found the original management plan helpful in informing any decisions put before them regarding potential impacts on the WHS (and also to offer them a link to view a digital copy of the existing management plan - they were all sent a printed copy when it was launched in 2006). The second letter alerted them to the start of the October consultation process.

EXTENT OF THE RESPONSE

Parishes/Town Councils

Replies to the first letter were received from Combe PC and Woodstock TC, along with a request for the link to view the management plan received from Stonesfield PC. A further response from Woodstock Town Council was received in response to the October consultation process.

Wider audience - newspaper advert/article

It was not possible to track the number of responses generated directly from the newspaper advert, but two comments were posted to the on-line report about the consultation. Neither were helpful (reproduced below).

Individuals receiving emails

The first e-shot resulted in 23.59% receivers opening their email. This amounts to 49,812 emails opened. The click-through rate from the email to the website was 13.44% - amounting to 28,380 people. Once on the website, the clicks through to the WHS consultation document was 274. The second e-shot resulted in a further 1248 page views and 9 further clicks to read the detailed information.

Of that total number, 13 response emails were received by HLM (reproduced verbatim below, with names removed).

Over all platforms, there were 18 responses - 13 from the emails, 2 from the newspaper and 3 from the local councils. The majority - 11 - were positive and/or contained helpful views and comments to feed into discussions about the way the estate is opened and presented to the public in the future. The recurring concerns were about traffic and parking once on site; two comments regarding the condition of the fisheries; and a desire to have more information and interpretation on a wider range of themes. Responses relating to issues outside the WHS numbered 4 (discounting the two comments posted to the newspaper article - see page A5.10 below). These were all concerned with development - either planning applications in the pipeline or the proposed future allocation for housing - which was perceived to be spoiling the setting of the WHS.

RESPONSES FROM WIDER COMMUNITY / AREA

Parish/Town Councils

Combe PC - received 15 July 2016

Dear Dr Percifull

The Parish of Combe values its links to the Blenheim Palace World Heritage site and recognises the associated benefits.

The lists of attributes circulated with your letter refer to 'views into and out of the site providing key linkages between Blenheim and the traditional English countryside and villages surrounding it'. It is the opinion of the Parish Council that the building programme currently being undertaken by Blenheim is impacting on the surrounding villages and the views that provide these 'key linkages' are being eroded.

SUMMARY

Comments relate to building taking place in the areas surrounding the WHS.

ACTION

This effectively goes beyond the remit of the WHSMP. However, the setting study will help define the characteristics of setting which contribute to the OUV of the WHS and will therefore assist in making informed decisions on planning applications, as they relate to the WHS. Survey work undertaken for the setting study shows that the key visual linkages between the WHS and its surroundings have been protected by existing planning policies.

Woodstock Town Council - received 20 June 2016

Dear Dr Percifull,

Thank you for your email of 17th May 2016. Woodstock Town Council is pleased to be consulted about the Management Plan Review for the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site.

The Town Council takes pride in the existence of such a world famous site in close proximity to the town and appreciates the benefits accruing to the community from the indirect encouragement of UK visitors and from around the world to sample the commercial and cultural attractions of the town itself. Moreover, the facility provided for local residents to experience free of charge the pleasures of the Park is also regarded as a welcome benefit.

However, the Town Council is increasingly concerned by the ambitious aspirations of Blenheim Estates to profit from housing development in and around the town in order to finance remedial works and improvements to the Palace buildings. It is the Town Council's view that a suitable buffer zone should apply to prevent harmful development and alternative sources of funding for any necessary building works explored. In a recent planning application by Blenheim Estates it is stated that the visitor numbers to the WHS have grown over the last ten years from under 300,000 to over 750,000, and other Estate businesses also grown significantly. This seems very relevant to the issue of funding. The development so far proposed would, in our view, irreparably compromise the setting of the World Heritage Site and the more extensive development of the town envisaged also compromise the essential historical character of the town, in which the Palace itself plays an important role.

You refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and seek our views on "how well you feel the existing framework...has helped you in making your decisions about matters affecting your town, all of which help to form the setting of the WHS." You ask if any additional guidance would be helpful.

It is our view that the generation of housing and land supply targets, effectively dictated by the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) developed by the unelected Local Enterprise Partnership which was appointed by the national government at county level, has robbed elected planning authorities of their proper discretion at local level and has reduced the influence of towns and parishes.

In the case of Woodstock we have been fortunate that the developers have not appealed against the decisions of both Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District Councils to refuse permission for their proposed development on land east of Woodstock, though they have since applied for a smaller project only slightly less objectionable. However, that good fortune owes nothing to the NPPF, which still urgently needs radical recasting in order to restore a proper balance between planning principles applied locally and democratically on the one hand and housing targets on the other.

The aspect of the WHS is still threatened by the developer's latest proposals, and, even if this application is rejected by WODC, which does not yet have a Local Plan in place though it is evolving one, an appeal to the inspectorate could still succeed on the alleged grounds that the extraordinary growth targets being generated by OXLEP for the 2016 refresh of the SEP once translated into jobs and housing numbers, are not accommodated by WODC's current land supply.

So, our answer in short to your question is that the NPPF is a big part of the problem, not a help, and that helpful additional guidance would require that economic targets should be balanced by a restored due regard to local, democratic legitimacy in planning decisions.

The voice of town/parish councils, as well as the district councils, should be heard and not steamrolled by the unelected LEPs –developer complex, frequently served by the same consultants.

This is important for the setting of WHSs as for other planning purposes.

SUMMARY

This response relates to development plans and proposed housing allocations in Woodstock and the Town Council's unhappiness with the NPPF, which goes beyond the remit of the WHSMP.

ACTION

The setting study will help define the characteristics of setting which contribute to the OUV of the WHS and will therefore assist in making informed decisions on planning applications, as they relate to the WHS.

Woodstock Town Council - received 13 November 2016

1. What makes Blenheim Palace special to you?

Blenheim is so special to Woodstock because of the beauty of the built fabric combined with both the natural and cultivated environment – all in such wonderful proximity to our town.

2. Whether you think we have identified all the challenges ahead?

Woodstock Town Council recognises the cost implications of maintaining the WHS to such high standards but does not feel that this justifies the scale of development proposed in and around Woodstock to provide the necessary finance. These areas proposed for development are part of the original gift of Woodstock Palace, Park and the demesne villages. They can only be sold off by the WHS once and then that source of funding is gone. Alternative sources of finance should be sought as a priority.

3. Whether you agree or not with the priorities we have set?

One of the most important challenges to 'enjoying the environment' which is not mentioned, is the impact on Woodstock residents of all the traffic generated by Special Events at Blenheim. We expect more robust plans to deal with the situations created and a way of ensuring these for all the events should be a priority

SUMMARY

Concerns are about (a) development plan within Woodstock; and (b) the impact that large scale event days - particularly traffic issues - have on the town.

ACTION

The development issues go beyond the remit of the WHSMP. In terms of the impact of traffic on special event days - the management team already prepare robust Action Plans for each event which are approved by the Safety Advisory Group of WODC who provide the approval for events along with a set of conditions relating to traffic and transport. Continual improvement is a key part of the Estate's approach to event management, with options such as offsite parking still being considered, alongside the proposals for an Oxford Park and Ride service close by.

Response from the Planning Director at G L Hearn, a planning consultancy who advise Crest Nicholson (house builders) and are currently acting on their behalf in preparing responses to the WODC land allocation for housing; and have also acted as advisers to OCC on their strategic housing need assessment. Received 4 November 2016 as part of the on-line consultation (**logged as an individual response: WHS consultation 12**)

I write in response to the consultation exercise relating to the Management Plan Review 2016-17, having reviewed the consultation document. These comments are submitted in the context of the Management Plan Review and raise issues of pertinence arising as a consequence of recent West Oxfordshire Council resolutions relating to the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. A consultation on proposed modifications to the Local Plan is scheduled to take place during November/December 2016.

Blenheim Palace is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with unique qualities that bestow upon it the significance of having 'Outstanding Universal Value'. The cultural and natural qualities associating with the Palace and the landscaped parkland setting are considered unique in a World Heritage context and of such exceptional significance that its importance transcends national boundaries. The Review document contains a series of priorities relating to the World Heritage Site (WHS) itself, but the consultation document is silent on the importance of the wider setting and the nature of adjoining land uses, current and proposed that could exert an impact on the integrity and Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. The document should address clearly the importance of the setting and the Key Views associating with the WHS and establish conservation guidelines to be adhered to in any land use documents that control the development and use of land beyond the perimeter of the Park. Within the Heritage Management Plan 'Figure 8: Conservation of the Setting' identifies key areas that could have an impact on the WHS if subject to development. Principal in this regard and lying immediately to the east of the Palace within the village of Woodstock are two 'residential zones' and an 'area of significance to the setting of Blenheim WHS' that together create a contiguous zone of significant sensitivity that immediately adjoins the Palace boundary.

The two residential zones cover existing dwellings that face the boundary of the Palace; the notation applying to these areas states: "Residential zones where significant, tall or prominent development could affect the setting of the World Heritage Site or important listed buildings at Blenheim". The zone covers all of the housing in Woodstock that abuts/faces onto the Palace boundary and therefore it is reasonable to conclude that any proposed development extending or otherwise consolidating residential development in or adjoining these notations should be treated extremely carefully. The adopted Local Plan adopts a strict approach (Policy BE11 – Historic Parks and Gardens) towards any development proposals that would adversely affect the character, setting, amenities, historical context, or views within, into or from a Park and Garden of historic interest, and Blenheim is mentioned specifically in this context. It is reasonable to conclude that the existing policy would preclude development of any significant scale at Woodstock having regard to the provisions of this and other policies controlling development. The area of significance extending to the east, which is important to the setting of the WHS, extends across much of the existing built area of Woodstock and encompasses farmland and open areas surrounding the town. Within this area any development proposals should not have an impact on the setting off the WHS.

In combination the policies of the adopted Local Plan and the Heritage Management Plan have successfully conserved the setting and integrity of the WHS by preventing development of any significant scale. The emerging Local Plan proposes to amend this careful and restrictive approach to development at Woodstock and is proposing three housing allocations at the town totalling some 670 new dwellings across three sites all of which will have an impact on the setting of the WHS. The largest of the three areas is located north of Banbury Road and lies almost entirely within the identified area of significance to the setting of the Blenheim WHS demarcated by Figure 8 of the Heritage Management Plan. The two other proposed allocations are each located adjoining the A44, both adjoining and wrapping around the prescribed residential zones. It is strongly contended that the location and scale of development proposed within the emerging plan will inevitably have an impact on the setting and integrity of the WHS; the review of the Management Plan should recognise and address this threat clearly and cogently.

The Local Plan modifications consultation exercise due to take place shortly and the subsequent examination of the Local Plan by Mr Simon Emerson (the Planning Inspector appointed to conduct the examination) in 2017 will provide the opportunity to check and challenge the approach being taken by the Council. However in view of the Council's proposed housing strategy the Management Plan Review 2016-17 should independently include provisions within that recognise the importance of the setting of the WHS and which seek to strengthen the presumption against development in the identified areas set out at Figure 8 of the existing Management Plan.

SUMMARY

HLM called this respondent to ask for some context to this response. GL Hearn are advisers to Crest Nicholson, a company that builds large-scale housing developments. G L Hearn are looking at the current WODC land allocation for housing and are questioning the new allocation for Woodstock. In relation to the WHS plan, they want to see that the setting of the WHS has been considered in this allocation.

ACTION

This is outside the remit of the WHSMP. however, the setting study will help define the characteristics of setting which contribute to the OUV of the WHS and will therefore assist in making informed decisions on land allocations and planning applications as they relate to the WHS.

One of the individual responses also related to this issue:

WHS Consultation 13

Received 4 November 2016

This one week consultation is really too brief a time to get a macroscopic reaction from the local citizenry of the overall maintenance needs of Blenheim Palace. I doubt if many even know about it. This is a private edifice. If the owners cannot afford the restoration work, other than by a massive development of 300 houses and retail shops on valuable food producing farmland on the pleasant approach to Woodstock as well as targeting more such prime farmland north of the town (670 units total), then perhaps the Blenheim Management Team should seriously consider transferring, turning over, selling, or whatever, the palace and park to the National Trust. Woodstock is being slowly choked to death from overdevelopment from all azimuths and the Blenheim Estate is behind it all.

SUMMARY

Building on Woodstock should not be allowed - give it to the National Trust if the estate cannot afford to care for the Palace

ACTION

None - this suggestion is not something that can be acted on

Newspaper advert / article

While it was not possible to track the extent to which the newspaper presence resulted on direct clicks to the website, two comments were left directly on-line in response to the article. Neither were helpful but are reproduced below.

The Oxford Times

Have your say on the future of conservation at Blenheim Palace
news headline / lead story 2 November 2016
(same story run in the Oxford Mail on 1 November 2016)

Blenheim Palace has launched a public consultation to review the plan that guides conservation on its historic estate. The public are being asked for their opinions on the Woodstock palace's World Heritage Site management plan, as it marks 30 years since first being included on the World Heritage List. The purpose of the plan is to reflect on conservation achievements over the last 10 years, and to establish restoration priorities for the next 10. The palace would now like to hear the public's thoughts on what it has identified as its most important challenges. In the past few years, Blenheim has been involved with research projects that have provided greater understanding of how to care for and maintain selected parts of the site. These include a comprehensive study of the history of the designed landscape, the development of a dedicated management plan for care of the landscape and a comprehensive tree survey. Residents can have their say on the future of conservation at Blenheim Palace by visiting blenheimpalace.com/whs. Once visitors have read the document they can voice their opinions by emailing info@hlm-ltd.co.uk. The consultation will come to an end on Friday.

[2 comments](#)

420World

10:42am Tue 1 Nov 16

Break it to the ground or give it to the homeless, a brothel is a good idea

BogoffOCC

12:40pm Tue 1 Nov 16

Convert in to a homeless hostel and turn the grounds in to social housing and leisure grounds, which is what west oxon really needs, not the over priced rabbit hutches the estate and their cohorts are dumping in the area whilst they destroy village life and load up our over crowded transport network for profits ONLY.

WHS Consultation 1

Received 7 October 2016

I had tickets for the Thursday of the Countryfile Event at Blenheim Palace. My friend and I drove from Bidford-on-Avon, only to join a queue of very slow moving traffic with a further 7 miles to Woodstock; the traffic was moving one car length at a time, with many minutes between each move, when we decided to turn back and abandon our eagerly anticipated day out. Many other vehicles were also taking similar action. This congestion, was most likely being caused by the entry ticket checking, and/or purchasing at the rear gates. Surely the event organisers must have realised that funnelling the numbers of cars trying to access the Palace grounds through such a narrow street in central Woodstock to this limited entry point would cause traffic chaos. Local News items on TV hailed the Event as an enormous success, much of it measured by the tailbacks of traffic in the surrounding area. Serious consideration MUST be given to the opening of the main Palace entry gates for the ambitious development plan, and the resulting press of traffic such a plan would attract.

SUMMARY

Specific poor experience on first day of Countryfile Live. Please make this better in the future

ACTION

The problems which arose on the first day of Countryfile Live were discussed with the Safety Advisory Group at WODC. The issues were identified and improvements were made for days 2, 3 and 4. Lessons have been learn which will inform plans for future large events, but unexpected external factors outside the control of the SAG or Blenheim Palace can affect the best prepared plans.

WHS Consultation 2

Received 7 October 2016

Thank you for sharing your vision with us, and letting us see what you are hoping/wanting to do. We visit the palace and grounds as often as we can, travelling some 150 miles each way to do so, as we thoroughly enjoy the atmosphere you have created, and every trip we marvel at the palace, its contents and history. On the whole your plan achieves what we would consider to be the right objectives (e.g. access to the walled garden through the main park - excellent, and long overdue) , but could we please add a couple of points, which may already be included, but at a lower level of detail - if they are not, then could they please be added?

1. Palace interior - please re-instate the opportunity for visitors to see the interior without the need for organised tours, for both ground and 1st floors of the palace - we would much prefer to take our own time and also avoid the crowds - maybe there could be a set time in the day where 'free roaming' is allowed?
2. Enjoying the World Heritage Site - Events and Access - within this heading, one thing you have not mentioned is those who chose to walk into the estate - if walking from Woodstock access and exit is easy for the pedestrian, but from Bladon and the caravan park, authorised pedestrian access requires a walk along the main road to use the Hensington Gate - would you please consider an authorised pedestrian access and exit through the vehicle exit? We understand that to have a staffed entrance would be costly, so perhaps an access/egress using the annual pass as a 'swipe' card to ensure revenue is not lost, and eliminate staff manning costs?
3. Enjoying the World Heritage Site - Interpretation - can you please consider an exhibition showing the archaeological investigations results - or if this is not possible, maybe a newsletter with this information? as this helps to put the whole estate into context.

SUMMARY

Please re-instate 'free roaming' in the Palace. Walking from Bladon and the Caravan Park - new pedestrian entry point? Can there be an exhibition on the archaeology.

ACTION

The Palace tend to employ 'free-flow' for visitors on Sundays, but will keep in mind the possibility of extending this. The use of 'live' guides is a benefit to visitors, offering more information, but if there was a move to audio guides then additional free-flow would be an option. Pedestrian entrances into the park are under review and will continue to be monitored. The Palace will look at creating a dedicated portal from the website where all specialist documents that support the WHSMP can be viewed.

WHS Consultation 3

Received 8 October 2016

One immediate comment I have to make in response to the Blenheim planning document is that it is complacent about parking, blandly saying this will be kept in mind.

It is a disgrace that parking is allowed right up to the Palace on the eastern side. This means that the great views to the Palace across the lake from the High Street entrance or elsewhere are tarnished by the intrusion of dozens of cars and coaches. Even worse, at busy times there can be parking from the northern front of the Palace down to the great Vanbrugh bridge.

I appreciate that disabled visitors and coach parties of the elderly need to be brought to within a short distance of the Palace and set down there, but that is no reason to permit long-term parking near the eastern entrance. There no doubt should be a small and inconspicuous parking space there for disabled drivers, but long-term parking for other drivers and for coaches is unacceptable, and unworthy of such a magnificent site. And you are not short of large but non-intrusive spaces nearby which might be used for overflow parking.

SUMMARY

Plan is complacent about parking. PLEASE remove cars and coaches from Flagstaff which spoil the 'greatest view'

ACTION

The management team agree that less cars close to the Palace would be beneficial. They are currently in discussion with Historic England to look at how to improve parking on-site, which will include locations for a coach park.

WHS Consultation 4

Received 12 October 2016

1. What makes Blenheim Palace special to you

The openness of the grounds; beautiful naturalness of the area and encouragement of wildlife within the grounds.

Maintenance of monuments around the grounds; the introduction of art pieces e.g. the iron horse is fantastic has a great presence within the gardens - hopefully will be able to hold onto this amazing piece for a number of months for all to enjoy.

Maintenance of the ponds - although the carp have been removed I understand due to threat from mammals / otters?

mobility services around the grounds to enable less mobile members of the public to enjoy the grounds

The shop has quality pieces - especially like the kitchen liquids and scourers that you can take away and enjoy within your own home

The house itself is stunning to see - with artistic events and xmas trees - gives different insights

the lunches over the terrace / ponds - although the champagne area has now been removed and the food here is not the same service nor choice it was 6 months or so ago - the choice of meals was more traditional eating / high tea champagne was very enjoyable

2. Whether you think we have identified all the challenges ahead 3. Whether you agree or not with the priorities we have set

Well structured and clear plan - I would observe higher priority to conservation to the traditional structures within the grounds e.g. the bridge / Also

focus to encourage wildlife to the grounds (protection of carp in the pond so they can be enjoyed / viewed; / maintain the fantastic garden plantings e.g. roses / planting. Agree highest priorities are: THE LANDSCAPE – GARDENS and THE LANDSCAPE – PARKLAND LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY – HIGH PARK

SUMMARY

Love the openness of the grounds; new art pieces; and special events; mobility services; and the shop. Concern about carp in the garden ponds; food at terrace restaurant not as good as in the past

Challenges - conserving the historic structures; encourage wildlife and maintain fantastic gardens

Priorities - gardens and ecology

ACTION

With an SSSI in the park, wildlife is high on the management agenda. The carp in the garden pond were removed during conservation work to the structure. Catering quality is taken seriously, changes have been made to the restaurant offer and the Orangery Restaurant is greatly improved.

WHS Consultation 5

Received 27 October 2016

Thank you for inviting feedback on the WHS Consultation.

As a resident of Woodstock with a young family, we use Blenheim a lot, and it was a key factor in us moving to the town a year ago. I think more could be made of the link with the town in terms of the history of the town and its royal links. Are there also plans to further develop the pleasure gardens, as there is still some space for more play equipment?

I was also wondering what educational programmes could be offered, for example stone wall building, tree planting, conservation etc.

SUMMARY

Like to know more about history of links to Woodstock / Royalty. Education programmes would be great - practical conservation

ACTION

As previously stated, the management team will look at creating a dedicated online web portal where all specialist surveys and information documents can be viewed. In terms of practical conservation, as the Palace is open for much of the year, there is a move towards repair and restoration works being undertaken in view of the visitors, and making this an additional educational attraction.

WHS Consultation 6

Received 27 October 2016

Lake - your water has quite a history for its fishing, pike and tench especially have been making their mark on your site. Unfortunately the water appears quite lifeless and only a few fish are caught at all.

All places of interest started next to water - let it be river (either oxbridge city), or lake.

Please find funding to re-establish your water life. For the members of the Tench Fishers - Blenheim is considered a very important water

We love Blenheim palace

SUMMARY

We love Blenheim Palace. Fishing - lack of fish, please re-establish water life. Tench fishers see this as a very important water

ACTION

The on-going study of the lakes and the action plan being prepared will address the issue of fish alongside the many other elements that need to be balanced in order to restore the water to a better condition.

WHS Consultation 7

Received 28 October 2016

I am responding to the plan in my capacity as a resident of Bladon and local councillor. The County Council are working with Blenheim on the plan and that will be the council's official response.

The plan shows the challenges of maintaining a World Heritage Site that is used by thousands of members of the public and expect the high standard to be maintained. It is positive that a plan is in place to ensure this vital work continues.

I think it goes without saying that any development needs to be sympathetic to the Palace's original design, however I do not see why there shouldn't be development in a 21st style rather than simply pastiche designs. It might be worth reflecting that if there was a planning committee back in 1720 would they have given approval to such a modern design? I hope that the palace will still be in position in 2316 so some 21st century architecture should not be forgotten.

I am particularly pleased to see the reference to car parking and joint ticketing as below.

- continue to monitor car parking needs and be alert to the needs of any change should this be required.
- Setting up further links to public transport networks, particularly in relation to offering combined transport and entry ticket offers, provide an alternative to the car.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to respond and I hope the plan is successful.

SUMMARY

Demonstrates the challenges of maintaining expected high standards. Positive document. Development inside WHS needs to be sympathetic but can be 21st century design. Car parking and joint ticketing a very good idea

ACTION

The team will continue exploring current joint ticketing and pilot schemes such as the new shuttle bus service from Oxford Parkway to Woodstock starting in December this year.

WHS Consultation 8

Received 28 October 2016

Thank you for inviting comments and posting the Document which I have read - I can see much hard work went into it.

I didn't notice anything in particular with regard to motor access to the Palace.

I'm local (Witney) and have a Privilege pass so I intend to visit regularly. On days when I've arrived early and there isn't a large event scheduled, access is smooth and pleasant. When I've accessed on days when there are large events, access has been more problematic. Queues build up to the two checkpoints - some visitors require day passes and pay in cash or buy credit card, all of which takes time and those of us who just need to show our cards are not offered a fast track checkpoint - which would be great for us and maybe save on the queuing time overall and presumably the backing up of traffic into Woodstock itself. I appreciate the need to take payment at an early stage so that those who didn't realise they need to pay/don't want to pay may leave easily, but it did seem that a Prepaid/Pass Holders queue might ease things a little. It may be that such an approach has been tried in the past unsuccessfully.

I hope the above assists.

With all good wishes for your work,

SUMMARY

Car access - as a pass holder can we have a 'fast track' on busy days?

ACTION

A 'fast-track' entry is provided whenever possible, but cars still have to be stopped and checked. On major event days a policy of 'park then pay' is adopted, so on these days pass-holders can park without queueing.

WHS Consultation 9

Received 30 October 2016

I read the document with interest, and feel that much of what it says makes sense within the constraints that you are required to operate.

For my own personal interests, I would definitely support a review of the public transport links - as a non-driver, but also not a cyclist (!) I need to use train and bus to visit and whilst this is not currently an inconvenience, promoting connections (especially from the new Parkway station) would be welcome.

As regards Site Interpretation, I would also advocate exploring an increased use of things like a phone app which would have the capacity to provide massive amounts of information depending upon the level of detail that the visitor wishes to find out (and, perhaps, even follow-up on when they are back home again!) Your website is excellent; it feels as though this could be taken further.

And I genuinely commend you for the increasing range of events that are being offered, with very little sense of needing to compromise with the integrity of the estate itself. Clearly the big events make the site less ideal to visit for anyone else, but it seems to be working out OK. Controlling numbers is the critical thing, of course; I hope you don't feel the need to add too many more big events merely for financial reasons, to avoid the need to expand the existing ones too much.

Keep up the good work!

SUMMARY

Public transport links please - as a non-driver. Site interpretation - so much of interest that could be shared -website / phone app. Commend estate on increasing range of events which are more inclusive without compromising integrity - controlling numbers is crucial.

ACTION

The new shuttle bus link with the Oxford Parkway station will commence on 11 December. Discussions are on-going to create a similar link with Long Hanborough station, but these have not yet been fruitful. A phone app has been considered but achieving it is a challenge and keeping it up-to-date would carry staff/cost implications. Increasing the information on the website can be considered.

WHS consultation 10

Received 3 November 2016

News of this consultation only surfaced today, so not much time to digest and respond. At a quick glance, there appears to be about 50yrs worth of work to do by 2026. I write as someone who has regularly events, since the One Day Event horse-trials in 1991.

Major points - I am concerned by the wear and tear to the parkland by the large number of visitors and vehicles. It would be interesting to see how vehicle fumes and tread wear affect the plant-life. I am also concerned by the number of HGV vehicles entering the park through the centre of town to setup and take-down events. Some are travelling past shops, restaurants and domestic residences at various times of the day and night causing inconvenience.

Moreover, I am concerned that Blenheim Palace promote annual events as being bigger and better than the previous year. I wonder when are people going to wake up to the fact that bigger is not synonymous with better. The Palace events are generally less pleasant to attend than they have been in the past. The number of visitors over the past five years appears to have increased, many paying high entry charges and costs for refreshments, whilst the general condition seems to have deteriorated, rather than improved. The elements have caused a great deal of wear and tear on the stonework, leaving it looking rather listless. Likewise, signs of damp in some of the ceilings and walls is frankly depressing.

Whilst being an art-fan, I am dismayed to see pieces remain as permanent fixtures at the end of exhibitions, rather than being removed i.e. the Weiner ceiling in the long library. Whilst I can appreciate seeing modern pieces alongside the period décor (in small quantities), these pieces cannot be seen as comparable restoration pieces to the listed building.

I do hope that you, the committee and trustees take some of these points on board.

SUMMARY

Concerned about wear and tear caused by events and vehicles. HGV's coming through Woodstock gate and through park. Does not enjoy events as much as in the past - more expensive. Feels condition of the Palace has deteriorated in the past five years not improved. Art fan who does NOT like some exhibition pieces remaining as permanent - prefers the historical art pieces.

ACTION

Events are rotated to keep wear and tear to a minimum. Over the past ten years the increased revenue from visitors and events has allowed much more to be spent on conservation activities - now c£2M annually. Some re-direction of HGVs to enter the park away from Woodstock is being investigated.

WHS Consultation 11

Received 3 November 2016

It has been a pleasure seeing the care being taken over the management of the Park and Palace. Thank you for the opportunity to comment:

- The approach through the arch from Woodstock is outstanding. It has a real 'wow' effect as you pass from the confines of the streets and high walls to the huge view across the lake to the bridge and palace. In contrast the main approach used by most visitors is poor being spoilt by coach parking in front of the palace and later in the day flood lights from unprotected sources. Would it be possible to find a different area for the coaches to park after dropping off their passengers? Would it be possible to use a different form of lighting with an invisible/protected source that will not blind viewers wishing to enjoy the view towards the palace? The palace looks magical when lit up in the weeks before christmas but this effect is destroyed by the current lighting arrangements between the area where the Christmas trees are sold and the car park.
- As a Combe Village resident I long to be able to take friends to see the palace – for instance a quick trip on a Sunday afternoon after a good lunch - however the cost at £100 for a family is not justifiable in this context. Is it possible to arrange a pricing strategy that allows local residents to bring their friends? I feel the Annual Pass is a good idea. We purchase one each year. Could you double the price and allow holders to bring a friend? (Similar to a life membership of the National Trust).

Thank you for managing the site so well.

SUMMARY

Pleasure to see such care being taken over the management of park and palace. 'Greatest view' spoilt by coaches and cars at Flagstaff - and floodlights from unprotected sources e.g. where Christmas trees are sold. Annual pass holder and Combe resident - consider scheme that allows friends in too? NT Life membership allows one free guest.

ACTION

The use of temporary lights is being addressed. Car and coach parking is being discussed with Historic England. The introduction of the Annual Pass has been a very positive benefit for regular visitors but there is currently no plan to extend this further.

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

BLenheim PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW 2016-17

You are invited to send us your comments and views on:

1. What makes Blenheim Palace special to you
2. Whether you think we have identified all the challenges ahead
3. Whether you agree or not with the priorities we have set

Send your comments by Friday 4th November to
info@hlm-ltd.co.uk

BLENHEIM PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW 2017 CONSULTATION

The purpose of the World Heritage Site management plan is to identify both long term and day to day actions which will protect, conserve and present the Site. The 2017 management plan for Blenheim Palace will, in particular:

- contain the location and Site boundary details
- describe the attributes of the WHS, which have been identified since 2006
- reflect on the achievements since 2006 and consider the current issues affecting the conservation of those attributes and the Outstanding Universal Value, as well as the enjoyment of the WHS
- set out a new prioritised action plan aimed at maintaining the OUV, authenticity and integrity of the site



BLENHEIM PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW 2016-17

CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

THE BUILDINGS

THE LANDSCAPE – GARDENS

THE LANDSCAPE – PARKLAND

LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY – HIGH PARK

ENJOYING THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

THESE ARE THE KEY CONSERVATION CHALLENGES WE HAVE IDENTIFIED

BUILT FABRIC

BUILDINGS: THE EXTERIOR OF THE PALACE

- North Forecourt and North Steps repairs
- West Front paving repairs
- West Colonnade repairs to lead roof, plaster ceiling and statuary
- West Quadrant stone and roof repairs and renewal
- South Portico stone repairs and to flanking elevations including columns
- Various other roof repairs
- Flagstaff Gate Statues and roof repairs
- West Pavilion stone repairs
- North Front window repairs and redecoration
- South West Tower roof
- Stables Tower repairs
- Great Hall stone repairs
- East Colonnade stone repairs



BUILDINGS: THE INTERIOR OF THE PALACE

- fire compartmentalisation
- fire detection
- stone stair works
- undercroft wall repairs
- rooflight repairs
- roof structure investigation
- marble fireplace repairs
- window redecoration
- iron cramp damage
- specialist joinery repairs
- decorative plasterwork repairs

The contents of the Palace are carefully managed and monitored through a well recognised system devised by Sotheby's of London. The staff who work in the Palace are all given specific training on handling historic objects but there may be a need in the future to consider appointing a dedicated curator/keeper of the collections.



OTHER BUILDINGS IN THE PARK AND GARDENS

- Ditchley Lodge and Gate - urgent masonry repairs
- Grand Bridge - investigation and structural survey after which significant works are likely
- Hensington Lodge - external stone and stone chimney repairs, and assessment of wall movement; porch roofs and rainwater goods
- New Bridge - measured survey and investigations possibly leading to significant works
- Swiss Bridge - ironwork conservation
- Column of Victory - plinth dressings, stone and railing repairs
- Kitchen Garden - stone and brick repairs to wall, determine a use for the space
- Water Terraces - paving and obelisk repairs
- High Lodge - joinery repairs
- Temple of Flora - lead-work repairs
- Park Farm Outbuildings - removal of west courtyard sheds and associated repairs to historic fabric; and repairs to other historic ranges



CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

THE LANDSCAPE

LANDSCAPE: THE GARDENS

Over the past ten years a detailed management plan has been put in place for the parkland and there is now a need for a similar management plan specifically for the gardens so that new projects - which are the lifeblood of a vibrant garden - can continue within the framework of what needs to be conserved as part of the OUV of the site. This might include:

- finding a new project for the walled garden and reopening the connection between it and the Palace gardens
- clearing and re-opening the view of the lake from the West Terrace
- continuing to restore the Pleasure Grounds along the lake walk



LANDSCAPE : THE PARKLAND

- Continue repairs to park wall and to ha-ha's
- Desilting of Queen Pool, thinning vegetation on the island, and restoring views from the north end through the establishing wetland towards the Palace
- Rosamund's Well - restoration of the surviving structure and improving setting
- Works to the Lancelot Brown beech clumps at Grand Bridge in line with advice from Structural Engineer
- Repair historic fabric and investigate use for Furze Platt
- Careful management to woods on valley edges to define historic clumps
- Restore Mapleton Pond
- Investigate archaeology of Ice House
- Complete thinning and management of Lancelot Brown boundary plantations and clumps
- Prune young trees to create good form for the future
- Re-open views from shoreline line below High Park



LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY : HIGH PARK

- Conserve hawthorn and elder and species within the ground flora.
- In the long-term develop four types of management unit: wood-pasture (68%), closed canopy oak woodland (7%), boundary belts (17%), open grassland (8%).
- Maintain the minimum intervention approach to deadwood.
- Maintain and monitor existing programme of haloing around veteran trees.
- Location successor veterans.
- Planting seed collected from ancient oaks in High Park is considered preferable to natural regeneration.
- Monitor the impact of Acute Oak Decline.
- Consider a wider range of species in the boundary belts as a response to predicted climate change.
- More recently planted areas around High Lodge should not be replanted when felling is due
- Reduce deer browsing levels through long-term management and monitoring of the deer populations.



CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

ENJOYING THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Blenheim Palace is one of the most visited heritage sites in the UK, a reflection of its importance and value to the tourist industry nationally, regionally and locally.

Showing Blenheim Palace to the public is part of its history, while providing the opportunity for education, interpretation and enjoyment is a reflection of one of the site's attributes - it was given by the nation to honour a great military hero and has always been seen as a national monument.

The many ways in which Blenheim Palace can be accessed by the public allows a very wide range of visitors to find something that interests them but the challenge - as with any very popular heritage site - is to ensure that visitor numbers as managed in a way that does not damage the properties of the site.

To maintain the careful management of this it will be important in the next ten years to:

- continue with the new approach to the management of the events calendar which aims to spread activities across the whole year, balancing large and small events in order to manage the physical impacts on the fabric.
- in line with this, to look at ways of encouraging visitors to see more of the park, though improved interpretation and education, thus also spreading the use across the whole site
- continue to monitor car parking needs and be alter to the needs of any change should this be required. Setting up further links to public transport networks, particularly in relation to offering combined transport and entry ticket offers, provide an alternative to the car.



CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

DEVELOPMENT

The World Heritage Site, enclosed within its boundary wall, is over 2000 acres in size. It contains not just the Palace and its ancillary buildings, but also a range of properties from across the centuries of its existence. In order to protect the OUV of the parkland landscape it will be important to:

- continue to protect and conserve the vernacular characteristics of the cottage properties
- restore or find new, appropriate, uses for any unused historic structures in a way that respect the parkland setting. This would be in line with national good conservation practice which recognises that a building is best conserved when it has a use
- ensure that any modern buildings do not detract from the historic character and remove any that reach the end of their useful life.



BLENHEIM PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW 2016-17

ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

THE BUILDINGS

THE LANDSCAPE – GARDENS

THE LANDSCAPE – PARKLAND

LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY – HIGH PARK

ENJOYING THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

BLENHEIM PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE PLAN REVIEW

ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

Millions of pounds are needed each year to carry out on-going maintenance to the Palace and its interiors, to the gardens and to the landscape. The projects identified here are high priority works needed which go above and beyond that, at an estimated cost of a further £10M.

Palace Exterior

- West colonnade roof and plaster ceiling repairs.
- West quadrant stone and roof repairs. This is the quadrant to the right of the north portico.
- South portico stone repairs. The column capitals but particularly the high-level parapet and carved work with the bust of Louis are in much need of attention – stone decay and iron cramps being the issues.
- House maids and work room heights roof – notably the roof lights

Palace interior

- Fire compartmentation – works in hand over the next two years
- Below ground drainage and the undercroft walls which are suffering from damp and salts. Monitoring works are in hand.
- Continue to ensure all Palace staff have appropriate training in the care and handling of chattels, especially when they are moved and stored temporarily

Landscape - Gardens

- Prepare a 10 year management plan for the gardens setting any new projects in historic context to project OUV.
- Decide on a new long-term viable project for the walled garden
- Kitchen garden walls - requirement for repairs to the walls
- Re-establish view of Lancelot Brown lake from the water terraces
- Once walled garden project is defined, consider enhancing and re-opening route from Palace grounds into walled garden

Landscape - Parkland

- Grand Bridge - measured survey and structural survey being put in place to gear up for a major conservation project likely to co-ordinate with the lake work
- Queen Pool - complete surveys and dredge to original depth to restore clear, cool water
- New Bridge - masonry is in very poor condition and in need of significant conservation
- Ha-ha repairs to section south of Palace
- Restore Mapleton Pond
- Selected tree work in park to consolidate Lancelot Brown planting

Landscape - High Park

- Complete halo thinning programme of veteran trees
- Limited re-spacing of 100+ year old trees
- Impact of Acute Oak Decline must be monitored
- Veteran oaks to be protected from competition from new planting
- Make sure the shrub layer is conserved to improve overall habitat quality
- Maintain minimum intervention approach to deadwood management

Enjoying the World Heritage Site - Events and Access

- Look at ways to encourage visits to the wider park to spread impacts and increase enjoyment
- Ensure events calendar continues to spread major events across the year to minimise impacts on fabric and setting
- Continue to look for opportunities to encourage use of public transport for general visitors
- Control carefully number and type of events in Palace and gardens due to higher risk of impacts

Enjoying the World Heritage Site - Interpretation

- Continue to use exhibitions as a new way of interpreting the history of the site
- Consider creating permanent interpretation boards to replace temporary Lancelot Brown information
- Complete a digital archive of the key historic maps to improve access and protect the originals
- Develop the guided buggies tours
- The walled kitchen garden may offer a location for new education projects

Development within the World Heritage Site

- Re-use of existing buildings should be in keeping with the setting and retain significant heritage features
- All projects undertaken within the WHS to ensure that the setting of the Palace and other key features is conserved
- New buildings to be designed to enhance the attributes of the WHS and to protect the OUV.
- Traffic flow through the WHS should be a key consideration in planning new developments

Thank you for your time

Send your comments by Friday 4th November to
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