



Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site

Management Plan



**Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site and
National Heritage Management Plan
July 2006**

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Glossary of Terms

Supporting Volumes:

Appendices to Management Plan: 1 volume
Historic Landscape Restoration Plan by Moggridge and Cobham: 4 volumes
Listed Building Condition Survey by Rodney Melville and Partners: 5 volumes
Other Buildings/Structures Survey by Historic Landscape Management: 1 volume
Survey and Assessment of Archaeological Sites by Wessex Archaeology: 1 volume

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Preface

By David Lammy MP, Minister for Culture

I am delighted to present this Management Plan for the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site. The plan builds on sound management principles developed over a number of years to meet the challenges of both World Heritage status and National Heritage designation.

Blenheim Palace is a magnificent baroque palace which marked the beginning of a style of architecture which was to influence building design both in England and abroad. Some of the greatest artists and craftsmen in the western world contributed to the exterior construction and the interior decoration, creating a building that has been greatly admired ever since. The park in which the Palace is set was designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the 1760's and represents a stunning example of the English Landscape School of Art. The park's design incorporated many elements from the original landscape for the Palace to produce the perfect setting for an extraordinary building.

The Government is accountable to UNESCO and the wider international community for the future conservation and presentation of this important site. It is a responsibility we take seriously. This integrated Management Plan has been developed in close co-operation with the Blenheim Estate, together with the local community and others with a special interest in it. The Plan aims to sustain and conserve the outstanding universal value for which Blenheim is internationally important as well as conserve its national and local values. It highlights key issues for the future of the site and outlines how these will be addressed.

I am extremely grateful to His Grace the Duke of Marlborough and all those who have contributed to the preparation of this plan, in particular members of the Blenheim Palace Steering Group, English Heritage, the Countryside Agency, ICOMOS and the Management Plan team. I am sure that this document will prove to be an invaluable management tool to all those involved in the ongoing conservation and presentation of this unique place.



Foreword

By His Grace The Duke of Marlborough

My family have lived at Blenheim since 1719, and even three hundred years ago it carried historical associations with medieval and Tudor monarchs. Since then a rich and varied tapestry has been woven across the Park as its long centuries of use and development have left their mark in different ways. In recognition of its outstanding architecture, the national and international historical roles of my ancestors the first Duke of Marlborough and Sir Winston Churchill, and Lancelot Brown's internationally famous work of landscape art in the Park, Blenheim became a World Heritage Site in 1987.

It is my task to preserve and enhance this great legacy of my ancestors and I do so out of great affection for the place and a determination to 'keep Blenheim going' despite the many pressures we face. This management plan brings together, for the first time, all the strands of activity that we have been undertaking for many years as part of the day-to-day running of the Palace and its Park, including historical preservation, landscape restoration, public access and education, agriculture, fishing, game and nature conservation. Blenheim is unusual in being not just a World Heritage Site but also the private home of my family, and in supporting this management plan we hope to balance the two by considering and implementing its recommendations wherever possible. The Trustees and I appreciate that the plan is a living document, and one which we will need to alter, amend and review as circumstances and funding dictate. By doing so I am confident that it will help guide us in our desire to preserve the Outstanding Universal Value that makes Blenheim so special to us all.



Acknowledgements

Historic Landscape Management wish to thank all those who contributed to the preparation of this plan: His Grace the Duke of Marlborough and the Trustees; the staff of the Blenheim Estate; the members of the Steering Group; the management plan team of Ralph Cobham, Hal Moggridge, Nick Cox and Paul Falcini; archivists of local and national collections relating to Blenheim; and members of the local community and officers of local government who contributed their views. The Blenheim Estate also wish to thank the Countryside Agency and English Heritage for grant aid towards the cost of preparing this plan.

Executive summary

Introduction

World Heritage Sites are places of Outstanding Universal Value recognised as such under the terms of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention. They are part of mankind's priceless and irreplaceable cultural and natural heritage and it is the duty of the international community to co-operate to protect them.

Nominations for World Heritage Site status are submitted to UNESCO (United Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) by national governments and must be of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), judged against certain criteria by an inter-governmental World Heritage Committee. Once selected, sites are inscribed onto the World Heritage List. By the end of 2004-5, some 812 properties had been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Blenheim Palace was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1987. Currently, throughout the UK there are 26 World Heritage Sites, including Hadrian's Wall (first inscribed in 1987 and now part of the trans-national Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site), Dorset and East Devon Coast (inscribed in 2001), Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (inscribed in 2003) and Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City (inscribed in 2004).

The WHS inscription does not currently provide any additional specific statutory protection or financial aid from UNESCO or the UK government. It is an internationally recognised designation, which encourages the proper protection, conservation and presentation of the site. Producing a management plan is a first step recommended by UNESCO and UK planning guidance.

World Heritage Sites are, however, required to have in place adequate legal protection and appropriate management systems, interpreted in the UK as meaning a Management Plan. The Government is committed to the production of management plans for all World Heritage Sites in the UK where protection is currently achieved through national planning guidance.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) has a key role, as the government department responsible for setting policy for the historic environment and for overseeing the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the UK. The Government's main source of advice on its application is English Heritage, the Government's principal advisor within England on the built and archaeological environment. The UK section of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS UK) acts as an advisor to English Heritage for cultural World Heritage Sites in England.

Why is Blenheim a World Heritage Site?

Blenheim Palace is a World Heritage Site because the design and building of the Palace represented the beginning of a new style of architecture, unlike anything seen before it, and it went on to have a great influence both in England and abroad. The Palace is set in a park designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, vast in both concept and scale, which is a masterpiece of the highest order, and as such is widely considered to be 'a naturalistic Versailles'. The Park is a supreme work of landscape art in its own right, but at the same time it provides the perfect setting for the grand Palace.

Why is Blenheim designated as a National Heritage Landscape?

Blenheim Palace is designated as part of our national heritage primarily because the Palace is of outstanding historic and architectural interest, as is its setting, which is essential for the protection of the building. Both English Heritage and the Countryside Agency provide guidance to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on national heritage property.

The purpose of the management plan

This Management Plan has been written with the aim of sustaining and conserving the Outstanding Universal Values which make Blenheim internationally and nationally important, as well as conserving national and local values. It is a pioneering approach which seeks to deliver both the requirements of a World Heritage Site management plan and those of a Heritage Management Plan, in one integrated document. To do this it:

- sets out a vision for the sustainable future of the historic, scenic, scientific, cultural and social qualities of Blenheim Palace and Park, such that it will protect both World Heritage Site designation and the National Heritage designation;
- provides guidance to the Estate trustees and their advisers on practical management planning, to help plan and prioritise tasks and to inform annual financial and operational plans;
- ensures the careful maintenance and conservation (and enhancement where possible) of the Palace and Park, its associated buildings and grounds, informed by continued historical and scientific research;
- adopts an holistic approach to the conservation of the site which balances its many and varied special qualities;
- encourages high standards in the restoration of historic features and design of any appropriate new developments, features or landscaped areas which may be proposed in the future.

Preparation of the plan

This plan has been prepared under the guidance of a Steering Group. It includes representatives from

- The Blenheim Estate
- English Heritage
- English Nature
- Countryside Agency
- Department of Culture, Media and Sport
- ICOMOS-UK
- Oxfordshire County Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council.

The method used to produce this plan is based on the guidelines produced by

ICOMOS in *Management guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites (1993)* and *Informed Conservation (2001)* produced by Kate Clark for English Heritage, and *Preparing a Heritage Management Plan (2004)* produced by the Countryside Agency. It has been written by Historic Landscape Management.

Vision for the future

The Blenheim Estate aim to maintain and preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance, values and character of the WHS, whilst continuing to provide a home for the Dukes of Marlborough, and a high quality visitor experience for future generations. To achieve this the Estate will:

- maintain and manage the Palace and Park to preserve and enhance their character, and, where necessary repair significant buildings or replant parts of the Park in accordance with the objectives of this plan.
- use management practices that are consistent with the above and which are designed to conserve the heritage qualities of the plan area and its OUV (described in chapter 2) through appropriate and sustainable policies and practices.
- protect the existing opportunities for public access including existing public rights of way within the Park and the access arrangements to the Palace and grounds.
- enhance the qualities of visitor facilities and achieve new levels of excellence in visitor management and related experiences as one of the UK's top tourism destinations.
- interpret and present the history of Blenheim Palace and Park to a larger and more diverse audience, and continue to promote high quality education programmes.

These aims underlie the management of the enterprises, on which the Estate's economic, human, cultural (heritage), natural and infrastructural resources depend, and indicate the balance which is to be struck between different interests. The plan is flexible and accepts that there may be appropriate change in the nature, scale and timing of any work, which may follow from social, environmental or economic forces, as long as the change accords with the aims and objectives of this plan. The need to ensure continued economic viability of farming, forestry, tourism and other commercial activities of the Estate and the maintenance of Blenheim Palace as a home for the Spencer-Churchill family are recognised and encouraged.



View towards the Palace across the lake

Management Objectives

The order in which these objectives are numbered is not significant. Where an objective is divided into two parts, a) and b), these relate to the different focus of managing a national heritage landscape (a) and a world heritage site (b). Where no such division is made, a single objective is suitable for both designations.

Overarching objectives

Objective 1a: Maintain, repair and preserve Blenheim Palace and maintain and preserve Blenheim Park and grounds and pleasure grounds occupied with Blenheim Palace as required by the undertakings for the conditionally exempt estate.

Objective 1b: Maintain, conserve and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

Objective 2: Adopt the management plan as the framework for all plans, policies and decisions relating to the World Heritage Site.

Objective 3: Ensure that all uses, activities and developments within the WHS/HL are undertaken in a sustainable manner and to the highest possible standards.

Objective 4: Promote the need for special treatment and a unified approach by central government departments, agencies, local authorities and other statutory bodies with responsibilities for making and implementing policies and undertaking activities that may affect the WHS/HL.

Objective 5a: Maintain public access to the site as per the undertakings for the conditionally exempt land.

Objective 5b: Enhance public access, where possible sustainably, and ensure awareness of access opportunities, resources, education programmes and Outstanding Universal Value.

Objective 6: Blenheim Estate should continue to identify and monitor potential risks/threats to the WHS and ensure that appropriate plans and strategies are drawn up and implemented to mitigate for these threats.

The wider context

Objective 7: Maintain the park wall as the boundary to the World Heritage Site and as the historic physical boundary to the park.

Objective 8: Ensure that Blenheim is adequately protected from development that is incompatible with the unique status and character of the World Heritage Site / Heritage Landscape.

Objective 9: Maintain a high quality environment for Blenheim Palace by promoting the highest possible standards of design, materials and execution for repair and renovation, new development and alterations to existing buildings that may impact on the World Heritage Site. These should respect the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

Objective 10: West Oxfordshire District Council will ensure that appropriate policies to protect the WHS are included in the Local Development Framework, and will encourage adoption of this management plan as a material planning consideration.

Objective 11: The Estate will seek to engage with the local community through regular and structured dialogue so that they can understand how the local community perceive and value the Estate, whilst offering information on the WHS status and the importance of the site locally.

Conserving the archaeological heritage

Objective 12a: To continue to maintain Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the satisfaction of English Heritage, following a policy of minimizing ground disturbance, or tree planting, over sensitive archaeology as much as possible.

Objective 12b: To improve the management of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the satisfaction of English Heritage and the local authority.

Objective 13: To discuss with the County Archaeologist or a bona fide archaeologist appropriate management of any newly discovered sites and to report all archaeological finds to the County Sites and Monuments Office or Historic Environment Officer.

Conserving the architectural heritage

Objective 14: To keep the Palace and its associated buildings and structures in a good state of repair by continuation of the present high level of workmanship, through an annual rolling programme of maintenance, supplemented by a five-yearly fabric inspection of the listed buildings.

Objective 15: To continue to adopt conservation techniques with appropriate materials in the care and management of vernacular and listed buildings, carrying out repairs on a 'like-for-like' basis where possible and appropriate. Specifically, windows and doors should remain of painted timber where this is the original material (changes to UPVC or other modern materials must be avoided), and mortars should be lime based.

Objective 16a: To seek advice from English Heritage and West Oxfordshire District Council on proposals affecting Grade I and II* listed buildings.

Objective 16b: To seek advice from the Countryside Agency and West Oxfordshire District Council on proposals affecting Grade II listed, and unlisted, buildings.

Objective 17: To commission a measured survey and Conservation Plan for Blenheim Palace and its associated buildings.

Conserving the historic landscape

Objective 18a: Conserve the character, layout and features of the designed historic parkland landscape, giving top priority to maintaining and sustaining the landscape restoration operations implemented since 1982 while sustaining the key views and vistas, together with the cyclical management regimes on which the conservation and protection of the historic landscape depends.

Objective 18b: Where appropriate, restore, replace or enhance the features of the designed historic landscape.

Objective 19: Consider reducing the impact of game management practises where they may affect the international significance of both the designed historic landscape and the ancient woodland in High Park.

Objective 20a: Conserve the structure, character and fabric of the gardens and pleasure grounds (boundary defined on Figure 3).

Objective 20b: Where appropriate, restore important historic garden features whilst continuing the long tradition of ensuring that any new features and plantings are compatible with the World Heritage status.

Conserving the wildlife interest

Objective 21a: Identify and monitor the nature conservation interest across the whole site and develop policies, management regimes and monitoring practices that ensure their continued conservation.

Objective 21b: Where appropriate, adjust management practices to be compatible with habitats vital to species of nature conservation interest that are in harmony with the OUV of the park landscape.

Objective 22: Manage the High Park section of the SSSI in agreement with English Nature. Issues to consider are: (i) a long-term programme to remove conifer blocks; (ii) maintenance of existing open habitats and groundflora; (iii) continue the retention of some fallen deadwood left lying on the ground; (iv) the appropriate continuing encouragement and protection of natural regeneration; and (v) the conservation of veteran oaks through the maintenance of open glades free from potentially competitive plant growth.

Objective 23: Manage the open water sections of the SSSI with the aim of maintaining their marginal habitats by clearing marginal vegetation at the north end and allowing it to develop at the south end, where these activities do not conflict with the character and value of the designed historic landscape.

Financing conservation activities

Objective 24: Develop a sustainable financial basis with which to support the conservation activities within the World Heritage Site, thereby ensuring that adequate management resources and restoration, conservation, maintenance and renovation skills are available.

Objective 25: Maintain a balance between scenic, scientific, historic and architectural features when preparing budgets to fund conservation activities and prioritise the work in order of most urgent need, without jeopardising the lower priority features/minority interests.

Objective 26: To investigate opportunities for funding, and where appropriate, implementing projects that help deliver this Management Plan, including enabling development where appropriate and consistent with the Management Plan.

Visitor management, access and education

Objective 27: To develop a Tourism Plan working in partnership with local and national stakeholders, and to consider opportunities to link with other World Heritage Sites internationally.

Objective 28: To continue to provide an integrated approach to the management of visitors in the site that delivers both a high quality, sustainable visitor experience and offers potential benefits for the local community without compromising the Outstanding Universal Value of the site. This should address vehicle and visitor (including pedestrian) flows and car parking, as well as considering any issues raised by the local community regarding event days.

Objective 29: To maintain and manage all rights of way in accordance with statutory duties and to promote all types of visitor access to the heritage property as widely as possible, at both a local and national level.

Objective 30: To maintain and continue to support the educational programmes and facilities provided by the Blenheim Education Service.

Objective 31: To enhance the visitor experience, particularly in terms of increasing understanding of and appreciation for the landscape and its structures, through the continued provision of improved orientation, information and interpretation.

Increasing understanding of the site

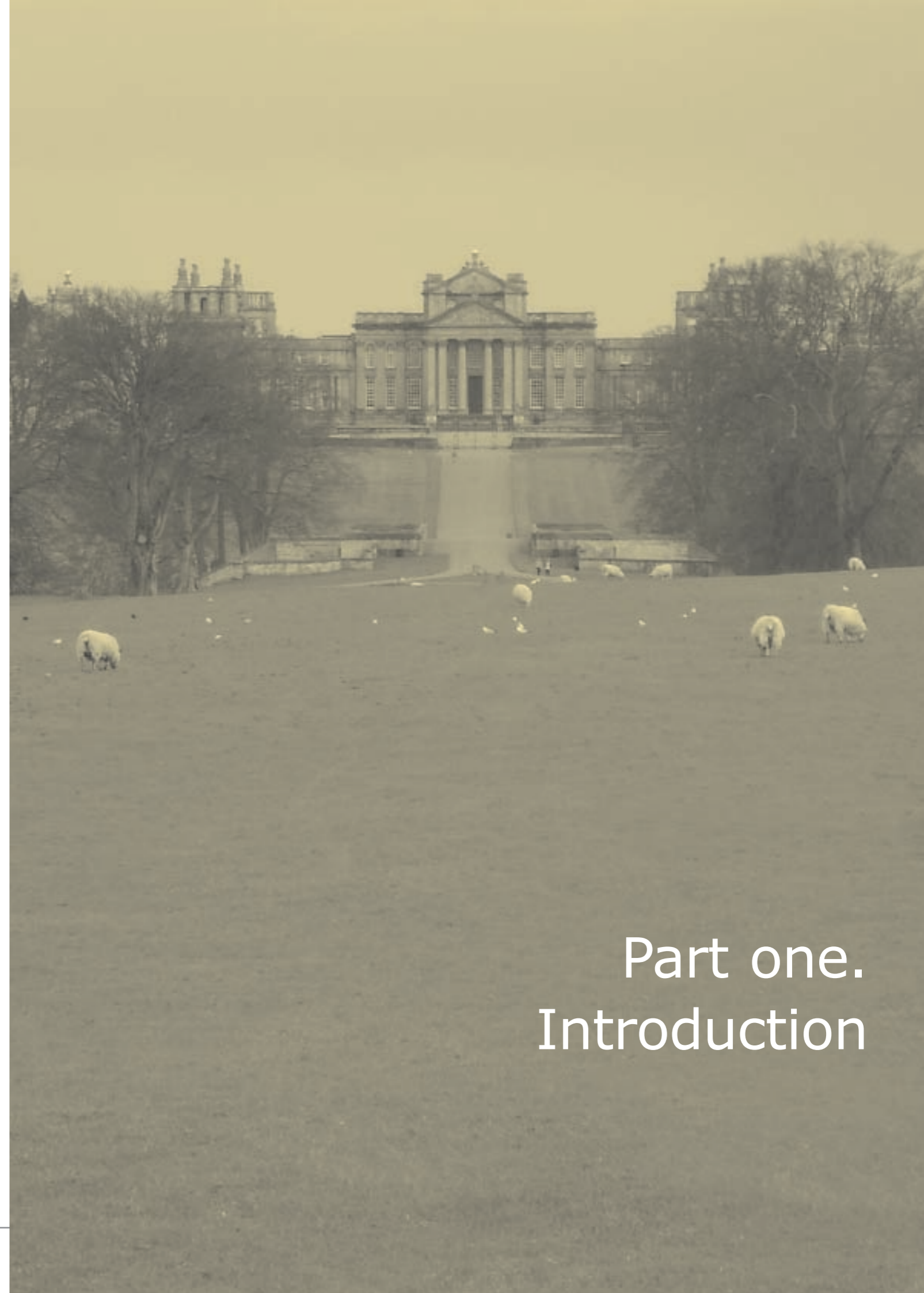
Objective 32: Facilitate and encourage appropriate research to improve the scenic, scientific, historic and architectural knowledge and understanding of the site so as to aid implementation of the management plan, and to ensure that the results of such research are disseminated to relevant bodies and individuals.

Objective 33: To complete an up to date catalogue of the archives held at the Palace, and, when resources allow, to move the documents to a more suitable location.

Implementing the Plan

Implementing this plan will require continued support and participation both from the Estate and from the authorities with an interest in protecting the national and international values of the site. The plan can provide the focus for co-ordinating this effort but it will need significant levels of commitment and resources to succeed. The Blenheim Estate have demonstrated a long commitment to the conservation of the Palace and its setting, and will remain both the champions of the plan and the co-ordinator of the works proposed in it. The Steering Group set up to guide the production of this plan will continue to offer support and assistance to the Estate in the future to help deliver its aims and objectives.

The aims and objectives of the plan have been translated into a suggested programme of practical action. The Estate will monitor and record progress by preparing an annual report (on a topic-by-topic basis) of activity within the WHS to record what has been achieved and what is planned for the coming year. The plan will also be reviewed every five years.



Part one. Introduction

Part one. Introduction

1.1

The purposes of this plan

There have been three reasons driving the preparation of this management plan. Firstly – to lay out a blueprint for the conservation, protection and management of the World Heritage Site; secondly – to set out the means for maintaining and preserving part of our national heritage; and thirdly – to give focus and direction to estate management planning in the future. The plan is concerned with the area at the core of the 12,000 acre Blenheim Estate, which is enclosed by the park wall and is known as Blenheim Palace and Park.

1.2

What are World Heritage Sites?

World Heritage Sites are places or buildings of Outstanding Universal Value. These are recognised as part of the World Heritage of mankind and thus it is the duty of the international community to co-operate to protect them.

Nominations for World Heritage Sites are submitted by national governments and must be of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and meet certain criteria to be chosen by the inter-governmental UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) World Heritage Committee. Once selected, sites are inscribed onto the World Heritage List. By the end of 2005 some 812 properties had been inscribed on the World Heritage List with 628 of these being cultural, 160 being natural sites, and 24 being a mixture of the two.

Places as unique and diverse as the wilds of East Africa's Serengeti, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and the Baroque cathedrals of Latin America make up our world's heritage.

1.3

The Blenheim inscription

The UK now has 26 World Heritage Sites. These include Hadrian's Wall (inscribed 1987 and since 2005 part of the trans-national Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site, Derwent Valley Mills (inscribed 2001), Dorset and East Devon Jurassic Coast (inscribed 2001), and Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City (inscribed 2004)

Blenheim Palace was inscribed in 1987 because it was considered to have OUV and met two of the criteria required to inscribe it on the World Heritage List.

- Criterion II – exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design
- Criterion IV – be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape, which illustrates (a) significance stage(s) in human history.

Like all other World Heritage Sites, Blenheim also had to satisfy two further criteria:

- The site must meet the test of authenticity in design, material, workmanship, or setting;
- The site must have adequate legal protection and/or traditional protection and management mechanisms to ensure its conservation.

The World Heritage Committee considered that Blenheim met criteria II and IV in the following way:

- *By their refusal of the French models of classicism, the Palace and Park illustrate the beginnings of the English Romantic Movement which was characterised by the eclecticism of its inspiration, its return to national sources and its love of nature. The influence of Blenheim on the architecture and the organisation of space in the 18th and 19th centuries was greatly felt both in England and abroad.*
- *Built by the nation to honour one of its heroes, Blenheim is, above all, the home of an English aristocrat, the 1st Duke of Marlborough, who was also Prince of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire, as we are reminded in the decoration of the Great Drawing Room [the Saloon] by Louis Laguerre (1719-1720).*

1.4

Implications of being a World Heritage Site

The WHS inscription does not currently provide any additional specific statutory protection or financial aid from UNESCO or the UK government. It is an internationally recognised designation, which encourages the long-term protection of the site. Producing a management plan is a first step recommended by UNESCO and UK planning guidelines.

The protection of the site relies on the respective national governments and site managers. Under the terms of the World Heritage Convention 1972, which it has ratified, the UK government has committed itself to the protection of World Heritage Sites which it achieves through national planning guidance and it has agreed that management plans be drawn up for all World Heritage Sites. All Steering Group members have key roles in ensuring the ongoing preservation, conservation and management of the World Heritage Site for future generations.

1.5

What is a National Heritage Landscape?

A National Heritage Landscape is defined by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as one which qualifies for conditional exemption from capital taxes for one of the following reasons:

- it is land of outstanding scenic, historic or scientific interest;
- its buildings and their amenity land are of outstanding historic or architectural interest;
- its chattels are historically associated with its buildings.

Blenheim Palace is designated as part of our national heritage primarily because the Palace is of outstanding historic and architectural interest, as is its parkland setting, which is essential for the protection of the building.

1.6

Implications of being a National Heritage Landscape

Owners of 'conditionally exempt property' are granted exemption from capital taxes provided that they fulfil certain conditions, as follows:

- they maintain outstanding land and preserve its character;
- they maintain, repair and preserve outstanding buildings;
- they provide and publicise reasonable public access.

These are set out in signed 'undertakings' which explain what the owner agrees to do in order to fulfil the conditions. They are agreed as detailed steps with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs as a condition of the tax exemption.

1.7

Aims of this plan

Over the next five to twenty-five years, the management plan aims to:

- set out a vision for the sustainable future of the historic, scenic, scientific, cultural and social qualities of Blenheim Palace and Park, such that it will protect both World Heritage Site designation and the National Heritage designation;
- provide guidance to the Estate Trustees and their advisers on practical management planning, to help plan and prioritise tasks and to inform annual financial and operational plans and their successful implementation;
- ensure the careful maintenance and conservation (and enhancement where possible) of the Palace and Park, its associated buildings and grounds, informed by continued historical and scientific research;
- adopt an holistic approach to the conservation of the site which balances its many and varied special qualities;
- encourage high standards in the design of any appropriate new developments, features or landscaped areas which may be proposed in the future.

1.8

Scope and content of the plan

This management plan is divided into five sections:

- Part One explains the World Heritage Site system and conditional exemption, and describes how the management plan was put together.
- Part Two describes the Blenheim World Heritage Site / conditionally exempt National Heritage Site and contains Statements of Value at international, national and regional levels.
- Part Three provides an overview of current management and access
- Part Four identifies any threats, opportunities and constraints and notes the key management issues. It goes on to define clear objectives for conserving the site and its features.
- Part Five contains a five-year action plan and explains how the plan will be monitored and reviewed.

The plan is concerned with the land covered by the World Heritage Site designation but also takes account of the setting of the site in a wider context.

1.9

How this plan was put together

This plan has been prepared under the guidance of a Steering Group. It includes representatives from the Blenheim Estate, English Heritage, English Nature, Countryside Agency, DCMS, ICOMOS-UK, Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council. The draft plan was available for public consultation from February to April 2006.

The objectives of the plan will be realised through focussing the present conservation activities at Blenheim and potentially through a range of projects and activities. The nature and priority of these, and the organisations responsible for their implementation are identified in the plan.

The method used to produce this plan is based on the guidelines produced by ICOMOS in *Management guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites (1993)*; *Informed Conservation (2001)* produced by Kate Clark for English Heritage and *Preparing a Heritage Management Plan (2004)* produced by the Countryside Agency.

The plan is based on:

- available reports and documents, supplemented by new site survey work on the architecture and archaeology, and on the general character of the landscape;
- input from meetings;
- the outcome of the consultation process.

The plan has been written by:
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Historic Landscape Management led a team of experts who contributed to the plan:
Hal Moggridge and Ralph Cobham – designed historic landscape
Nick Cox, Rodney Melville and Partners – architecture
Paul Falcini, Wessex Archaeology – archaeological matters.



Urn in the Formal Gardens

1.10

The consultation process

A consultation strategy was devised by HLM and endorsed by the Steering Group, based on models used for other World Heritage Sites in the UK and informed by management planning on other conditionally exempt properties. At the beginning of the consultation a questionnaire was produced, followed by an open public forum and exhibition day in Woodstock town. Information was also posted on the Blenheim Palace website where a special 'management plan' link was added. The methods of consultation used were:

- interviews and meetings with members of staff involving interaction with expert/external advisers
- steering group meetings
- questionnaire
- information posted on the Blenheim Palace website
- open public forum with display material transferred to web site
- two month consultation on draft plan

1.11

Summary of questionnaire results and forum

In March 2005, 500 questionnaires were distributed to the local community, staff, volunteers and visitors. Following the Public Forum in May, a further 500 questionnaires were distributed, mainly to the local community. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out what the people who live near, work at, or visit Blenheim enjoy and value about it, so that these values can be considered when setting conservation objectives for the future. It also sought views on key issues and suggestions. The percentage return was very small and may therefore reflect the views of a minority, but it is consistent with the level of responses received during other UK World Heritage Site consultation procedures.

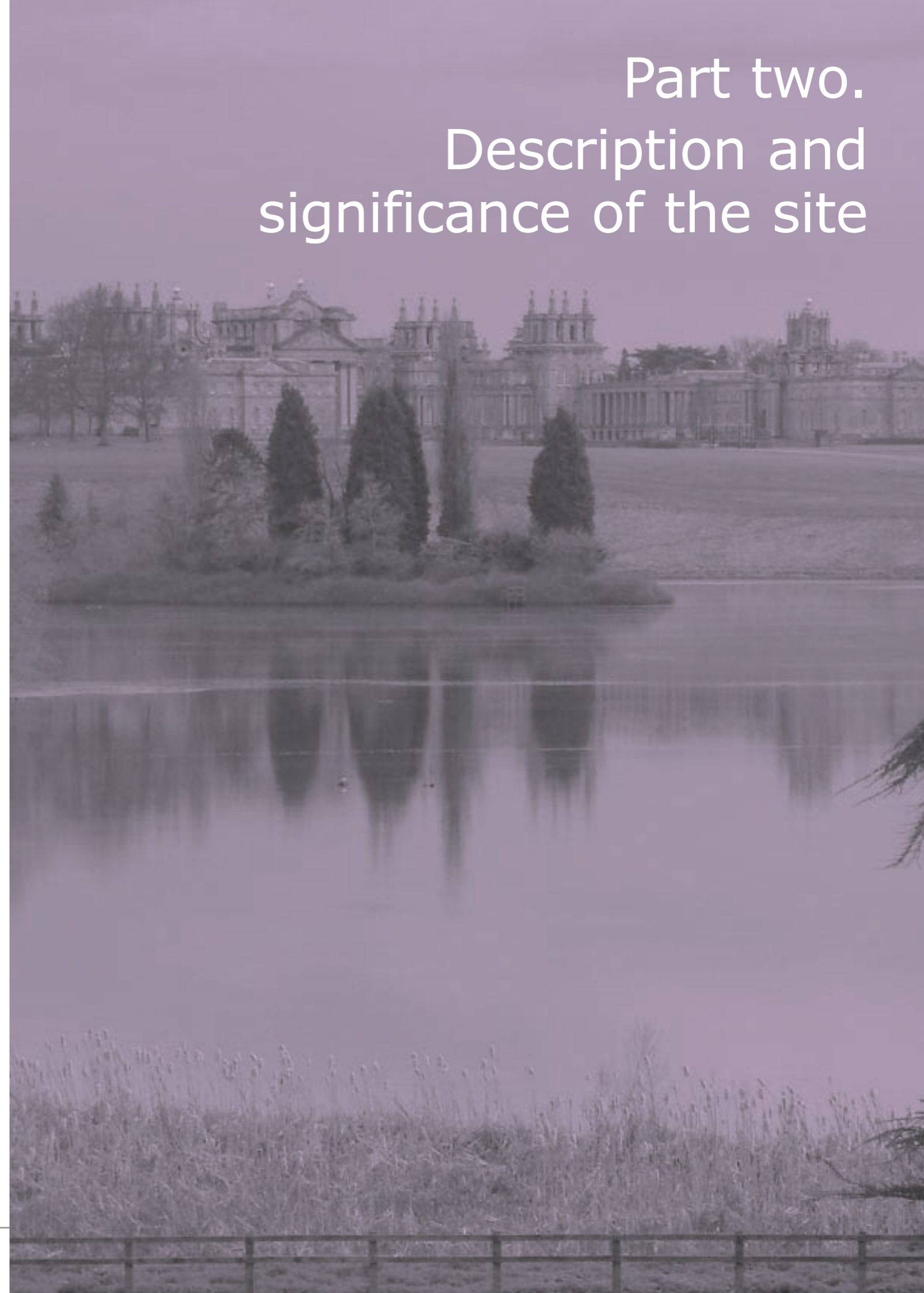
Of the 1000 questionnaires sent out, 119 were returned and an analysis of the results is reproduced in Appendix 8. This shows that 61% of respondents came from the local community in the immediate vicinity of Blenheim (namely but not solely Woodstock, Bladon, Long Hanborough and Combe);

23% were from a wider geographical area including overseas visitors; 15% were from the Estate or worked seasonally on the Estate; and 1% did not complete this question.

The key points that emerged were:

- Most respondents were aware that Blenheim is a World Heritage Site.
- For most people, it is its history and architecture that makes it a WHS.
- Most respondents liked the Palace, the Park and the lake best.
- Few people had a 'least favourite area'. Where mentioned this was mostly the pleasure garden/railway or the Churchill Exhibition.
- Suggestions for improving visits included better quality visitor facilities and food; increased conservation management of the site; better information; and reductions/improvements in noise/traffic management during large events in the Park.
- The main concerns were firstly conservation of the historic buildings and landscape; and secondly, access issues especially in relation to events, and the impact of visitors and cars both on the site and the local community. Respondents wished to see a balance between the conservation of the WHS and its economic activities.
- The priorities suggested for the future of Blenheim Palace and Park were (in priority order): conserving the historic buildings; maintenance of the park and gardens; nature conservation; and developing links with the local community.

Part two.
Description and
significance of the site



Part two. Description and significance of the site

2.1

Location and boundaries

2.1.1

The official name of the World Heritage Site is Blenheim Palace. The conditionally exempt property is Blenheim Palace and its parkland setting, which is a supreme landscape work of art in its own right.

2.1.2

Its official address is:
The Estate Office
Blenheim Park
WOODSTOCK
Oxfordshire OX20 1PP
Tel: 01993 810500

Geographical location of the site's approximate centre is:
Latitude 51° 50' 31" N
Longitude 1° 21' 41" W

2.1.3

Blenheim Park lies c12km to the north-west of Oxford and is set immediately to the west of the town of Woodstock (see Figure 1: Location map). It lies at the bottom of the dip-slope of the Cotswold escarpment, close to the point where the hills level out into the Thames Valley and its topography is gently sloping, divided by the deep winding valley of the River Glyme which dissects the park from north to south. Boundaries are formed by Woodstock and the A34 to the east, by the B4437 to the north, by open country and the village of Combe to the west and by the A4095 together with the village of Bladon to the south (see Figure 2: Boundary of the WHS and conditionally exempt site).

2.2

Summary description of Blenheim Palace and its parkland setting

2.2.1

Palace design

Blenheim was built from 1705 onwards to designs by John Vanburgh and Nicholas Hawksmoor. It is constructed from limestone ashlar with rusticated corner towers and details, lead roofs and stone stacks. The Palace has a generally symmetrical plan with classical, spatial organisation - essentially a great hall

leading into the saloon with suites of state apartments on either side for entertainment and ritual. The model for the palace derives partly from the Cour d'Honneur at Versailles as all palace architecture of the time tended to do. But the mathematical and rational classicism of Palladio also greatly influenced baroque architects. So in emulation of Palladio's villa planning, Blenheim has a tall square hall set on axis with a rectangular saloon. In addition, as new ideas about comfort and convenience emerged, Vanburgh created an east wing set at right angles to the state apartments for the Duke and Duchess, this being balanced by the Long Gallery to the west. Other innovations in the design were the inclusion of the water system. The East Gate was designed to evoke a sense of power, strength and awe, but it also doubled in its vast upper section as a cistern to supply water to the house, filled by a paddle-wheel engine housed in one of the arches of the Grand Bridge.

Massing, Scale and Elevations

The grouping of the main block and ancillary buildings give the Palace a substantial mass while the play of advance and recession adds to the volume. The central block is placed within a powerful architectural setting achieved by the bold but simple notion of making the kitchen and stables courts part of the main composition. The placing of the wings and their relationship to each other is a fine example of Continental baroque planning, and can perhaps be seen to derive from Versailles. The roofline gives the 'castle air' Vanburgh so much admired and, when seen from distance, the romantic medieval character of a true castle. Yet the decorative detail remains classical with the plethora of statues, urns and vases combining with the rustication to impart a Baroque character.

Thus the overall arrangement of the front facade with its curved wings, statues, heavy cornice and giant Corinthian portico bears a striking similarity to that of the temple of Mars Ultor as illustrated by Palladio and commented on by Wren. It is perhaps possible to view the original design as a temple of War, with the flanking courts acting like battalions and the columns representing legions. The effect would have been even more powerful when first complete as all the statuary and urns, which topped the columns or pilasters, would have echoed the form of Roman architecture

which enjoyed displaying the trophies of War. Uniquely at this time, the dominant military symbolism of the front is also repeated in the garden facade. Again the original Doric columns were replaced with those of the Corinthian order. As built the south portico is topped by a captured bust of Louis XIV which was taken from the Porte Royale of Tournai in 1709 by the Duke of Marlborough and can perhaps be seen as a comment on English domination over the French.

Originally the palace was to have Doric columns as the main order. This was logical for a site with military connotations as the Doric order represents masculinity and solidity. The change of the main order on the central block to Corinthian is surprising, though this was commonly used for the treatment of the main facade in Baroque architecture. The reasons for the change are not entirely clear though a need for more height on the hall and saloon may have practically required Corinthian capitals as the Doric bases were already under construction. Alternatively the use of the Corinthian order, which is more ornate, may have been because its strongly decorative nature was more attractive and acted as an evident display of wealth.

Symbolism

In conceiving the design for Blenheim both Vanburgh and especially Hawksmoor were conscious of using iconography not just for visual effect but also to convey meaning in the form of military prowess. This symbolism and decoration of the palace is therefore one of its significant elements which should be respected and conserved.

On the main block of the palace the rusticated corner towers project from the main facades and are topped by square towers, full of meaning. These features in particular give Blenheim its castle air, but more directly are topped by huge stone spheres supported by scrolled forms surmounted by ducal coronets crushing the inverted fleurs-de-lys, symbolising English military dominance over the French.

Inside the great court on the approach to the palace the design is flanked by the kitchen and stable courts with their giant Doric columns with rustic bands, recalling Serlio's fortified gates or Romano's citadel in Mantua. Either side of the giant Corinthian portico of the main block, arcades of Doric pilasters sweep out as if in the form of an apse to a Roman forum. On the tympanum of the portico the Duke's heraldry is



Interior of the Great Hall

emblazoned, surmounted by Pallas Athene in war-like guise, with the chained captives on the broken pediment beyond all recalling the iconography of Imperial Rome. Further symbolism is provided on the entrances to the courtyards, which flank the Great Court. On top of the Clock and Stable Towers magnificently carved British lions savage French cocks.

Context

Hawksmoor conceived the entrance from the Woodstock Gate in imperial terms, such that the victorious general arrived through a triumphal arch on his route to the palace. The gate is in fact another emblem recalling the military success of the Duke in the cause of 'liberty' and it is no surprise to find that it is modelled on the Arch of Titus from Serlio's *Terzo Libro* (1540). It was originally intended that the Column of Victory would also form part of this triumphal entrance and while the final design was by Lord Herbert and Morris, the original idea was Hawksmoor's. The use of a giant Doric order is at least appropriate for a military man even if under the Duchess's guiding hand it became more of a personal memorial. It has also been suggested that Vanburgh's Grand Bridge recalls the Duke's crossing of the Nebel as he made his way to Blenheim.

Craftsmen and Artists

The skills and talents of the craftsmen and artists who helped create Blenheim contribute greatly to its outstanding universal and national value, and as such it should be conserved. The chief masons were the Edward Strongs (father and son) who carried out the important stone work in the main building. Also employed were John Townsend who probably worked on the Clock Tower and his son William Townsend whose work includes the Woodstock Gates and Column of Victory. The Townsend's worked along side the Bartholomew Peisley's from Oxford who built the Grand Bridge.

Grinling Gibbons was a master craftsman *par excellence* and supplied the ornamental stonework, such as the Corinthian columns in the hall and some of the external sculpture, including the lions and cocks. Sir James Thornhill was also employed for decorative schemes on the ceilings and walls, his involvement being no doubt encouraged by the freemason connections between himself and Hawksmoor. Louis Laguerre, from whom Thornhill learnt, also provided much of the internal decoration. Thornhill was renowned for decorative historical schemes and was one of the few English artists to

compete successfully with those from France and Italy. Although Thornhill's work remains at St Paul's, Greenwich, Hampton Court, Charlborough and Sherbourne House, Blenheim still represents a significant survival of this artist's work. In the State Rooms east and west of the saloon tapestries by Judocus de Vos illustrate Marlborough's victories.

The tomb for the first Duke and Duchess of Marlborough was designed by William Kent and carved by John Michael Rysbrack. Other elements of the internal decoration, such as bookcase and fire surrounds were also designed by Kent and should be regarded as nationally significant.

2.2.2

Description of the park.

Blenheim Palace sits in the lower half of the park, towards the boundary with Woodstock town, surrounded by some 1000 hectares of enclosed parkland which, following Lancelot Brown's work of 1765, is today one of the greatest examples of naturalistic landscape design.

Elements of the early eighteenth century formal landscape survive in the form of the Grand Avenue, formal avenues and layouts in Lower Park; as does the ancient wood pasture in High Wood. The essence of the Brownian landscape consists of three parts: the 140 acres (56 hectares) of water; the open northern plateau; and the composition of clumps and plantations in the open park.

- The double lake, bisected by Vanburgh's bridge, flows sinuously between gently graded northern banks around the northern and western sides of the Palace with a long narrow western arm; the lake makes a sudden bend at the southern end to flow over a naturalistic cascade; downstream of this is, an artificial river, crossed by an elegant three arch bridge is carried in a serpentine around the south-west corner of the park, to drop away over a second, simpler cascade.
- The northern half of the park with its two dry valleys is encircled by a "deep belt of various trees, evergreens, and deciduous shrubs, whose mingled foliage exhibit the different gradations of tints.....". (Mavor 1st edition 1789).
- Browns clumps and plantations are carefully placed to accentuate and subdivide the open space of the park, framing a series of composed views.

The Brownian landscape also contains the legacy of much planting carried out during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the ninth Duke of Marlborough (see Figure 4 : Key Features). Many of the original designed features (boundary belts, the Grand Avenue and clumps) have been restored by the eleventh Duke, who has also added some game/forestry plantations and cover crops to the Park.

The Park displays several distinct areas (see Figure 3: Character Areas and Figure 4: Key Features).

Great Park - Essentially arable farmland at the north end of the park, through which the grand early C18 avenue and adjacent circular walnut clump have been retained, enclosed by shelterbelts of trees planted by Brown and adorned by clumps/roundels, originating respectively from Brown and from the ninth Duke's eras of planting. The area contains Brown's eighteenth century Park Farm complex, the late eighteenth century North Lodge, and the Ditchley Gate at the northern exit to the park. The north section of the Great Park retains important archaeological remains of Roman and earlier periods.

Lancelot Brown's centrepiece - Rolling parkland grass with carefully placed groups of trees surrounding the large, sinuous artificial lake, spanned by Vanburgh's bridge. The centrepiece is characterised by a sequence of carefully framed views and vistas such that the viewers' eyes are led across the Queen's Pool, the Lake and the Bridge and between groups of trees. These views are enhanced by the sensitively sculptured grassy landforms surrounding the Lakes and the Bridge.



View across the water and historic parkland towards the Column of Victory

The Valleys - Combe and Icehouse valleys, which have open grass on the valley floors and small clumps of trees (in many cases now vestigial) flowing down the valley sides.

High Park - A remnant of a very large medieval deer forest, some of which was subsequently emparked. This large area of ancient oak wood pasture contains trees of all ages, including veterans, interspersed with open glades. This area was left largely untouched by Brown's landscape works.

The Pleasure Grounds - The formal gardens and ornamental areas, also including walks through trees and shrubs, garden temples and the lake cascade. A mix of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century features. Most notable of these is a sunken Italian garden below the east front, and a spectacular formal terraced Water Garden below the west front, both designed by the Frenchman Achille Duchene between 1910 and 1930 for the ninth Duke. Beyond these the Victorian pleasure gardens have been simplified and in the last years of the twentieth century new garden features have been added, including a Secret Garden set between the palace and the walled kitchen gardens. Importantly a grassy oak-bounded vista from the Palace to High Lodge, where the Duke and Duchess resided during the construction of the Palace, has been restored.

Low Park and Pleasure Grounds - An area of typical parkland grass dotted with many individual trees, including some large veterans, and enclosed by avenues and belts of trees. These veterans, as vestiges of the old forest, were retained between the formal allees, which were designed by Henry Wise - featuring on the 17th century Park plans - and were left intact by Brown. On the edge of Low Park stand the Pleasure Grounds. These are open to the public for most of the year and offer a series of activities for children, including a maze and an adventure playground. Also within this area lies the private walled kitchen garden. The eastern extremity of the WHS site lies along the listed park wall, while the conditionally exempt area extends slightly beyond it.

Bladon Park - Parkland area with fewer trees and larger expanses of grassland, divided by a sinuous riverine lake, spanned by William Chambers three-arched Bladon Bridge.

The Lince - Secluded small-scale area of well-wooded park with few open spaces, dissected by the riverine lake. The Lince lies south of the listed park wall, and the WHS designation in this area includes a small section of Bladon parish south of the Glyme.

2.3

Brief summary history, broken down into development phases from pre-park to present day

2.3.1

The early landscape

Archaeological survey has found evidence of prehistoric and Bronze Age remains within the park, showing that man has been using and influencing the landscape of what is now Blenheim Park over a very long period. Grim's Ditch, dating to the first century AD, is one of the few visible remains of a complex system of linear dykes which once enclosed an area of c5700 hectares of countryside in north Oxfordshire. There is also evidence for use of the park in the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods, including the remains of a Romano-Celtic temple and a section of the Roman road known as Akeman Street. A fuller account of the archaeological record can be found in the Wessex Archaeology report (produced in 2005).

2.3.2

The Medieval period

Old Woodstock, which lies on the north bank of the river Glyme, had been the location of councils since before the Norman Conquest. By the 12th century a royal hunting lodge had been built in an emparked area to the west and New Woodstock subsequently grew up to accommodate royal hunting parties and visiting courtiers. Additions and embellishments which turned the hunting lodge into a palace, continued up until c1440 but by the early sixteenth century the Old Palace had begun to fall into decay, being described in 1551 as 'the mansion... for many years past hath been decayed and prostrated'. Thus Princess Elizabeth, James I and his son Charles I all stayed in the repaired gatehouse rather than the palace. James and Charles both enjoyed hunting and thus further land to the north of the mediaeval park appears to have been

enclosed in the 1620's and 30's and a new park wall was built.

When the Civil War began in 1642 Woodstock supported the king and the Palace was garrisoned by Royalist troops. After the execution of Charles I, the palace was bought by Lt Gen. Fleetwood and partly demolished although the park was enlarged. In the same year, Parliament ordered an end to unregulated felling of trees in the park which appears to have become derelict and neglected. Rather than hunting, Fleetwood used the park to keep and breed racehorses and at the restoration the equestrian activities were continued by Lord Lovelace, who occupied the gatehouse, and promoted race-meetings in the park. Despite the decline of royal and gentry patronage New Woodstock had become independent of the park and enjoyed a modest success and growth.

2.3.3

The building of Blenheim Palace (1705-1719)

John Churchill, who had been born a commoner, rose swiftly through the ranks of nobility and influence to become an Earl in 1689, and in 1702 the 1st Duke of Marlborough. A courageous soldier, Marlborough changed the face of Europe following his heroic defeat of the French at the battle of Blindheim in 1704 and six months later was rewarded most generously by the Queen. In 1705, Anne conferred on him the 'honour and manor of Woodstock', calling the palace 'that demolished messuage, courthouse or toft'. The gift consisted of holdings and property described in the Victoria County History as a '*conglomerate royal manor administered from the manor house in Woodstock Park*'. The surrounding settlements made up the 'demesne towns' of Bladon, Combe, Hanborough, Hordley, Stonesfield, Wootton, and subsequently Old Woodstock, which formerly had been treated as part of Wootton. The independent borough of New Woodstock, however, remained outside the gift.

Queen Anne gave the land, while Parliament financed the building of a new house for Marlborough and his wife Sarah, the architect of which was to be John Vanburgh. Vanburgh and his right-hand man Nicholas Hawksmoor went on to create a great palace on the opposite bank of the River Glyme from the old medieval palace, which was set within a vast formal landscape

masterminded by Queen Anne's master-gardener Henry Wise (1653-1738). This included many avenues, one of which was the Grand Avenue – a double row of English Elms with complex centre and southern end layouts. Wise and his team were involved from the outset, which emphasises the importance placed on unity within the whole design: palace, decorative and ancillary buildings and landscape conceived as a whole and focussed on the palace.

During the early C18 Sarah Churchill, determined to improve the setting of Vanburgh's Grand Bridge which sat incongruously above the insignificant River Glyme, conceived a plan to create, with the help of her husband's chief engineer Colonel Armstrong, a cascade, long canal and circular basin. The ghosts of these structures were revealed under the surface of the C18 lake by aerial photographs taken in the 1960s. She was also responsible for erecting the Column of Victory and for recalling Hawksmoor to raise the Triumphal Arch. Following her death in 1744 little further work was undertaken for some two decades.

2.3.4

Lancelot Brown and the English Landscape (1761-1774)

In 1761 Lancelot Brown was commissioned by the fourth Duke of Marlborough to give advice on improving and modernising the grounds at Blenheim. So began an association which lasted until 1774 and resulted in the creation of one of the greatest examples of the C18 school of landscape design. Brown viewed the great 2500 acre park as a whole, keeping some of its old features but also adding new ones to bring them all together into a united composition. He was responsible for creating the lake and disguising the cascade at the end of it. He remodelled the land around the water to soften the banks and slopes, and then dressed them with clumps of trees. The Great Park to the north of the palace was enclosed by perimeter shelterbelts, while the Grand Avenue, together with the formal avenues in Lower Park, and the ancient trees in High Wood were largely left undisturbed. To the south of the Palace he removed the southern parterre. To enjoy this new 'naturalistic' landscape Brown created carriage drives and walks which were carefully composed to provide the eye with constantly changing views of the park and the landscape beyond its walls.

2.3.5

After Brown – up to the early nineteenth century (1774-1892)

During Brown's time at Blenheim, William Chambers was working on embellishments to the Palace and after Brown departed he made proposals for changes in the gardens and in Lower Park which were carried out in the 1770s and 80s. One of these was a new bridge on the Bladon side of the park, below the cascade. Temples were added to the Pleasure Garden at this time, one of which was the Temple of Diana, to a design by Chambers. The fourth Duke also developed a wild and rugged garden area below the cascade where he added a great fountain and began work on extensive rock gardens, a proposal which had appeared in Brown's original sketch for the cascade in 1764.

The fifth Duke succeeded to the title in 1817 and continued the garden work around the cascade, wishing to create the finest botanical and flower garden in England. These included a Botany Bay Garden, a Chinese Garden and a Dahlia Garden surrounded by many exotic species. New buildings and structures were added, but little of this period of development survives today, apart from some of the larger trees. The extravagance of the fifth Duke was followed by inevitable retrenchment and little change occurred under the sixth Duke, while the seventh was a careful and prudent Victorian. His son, George was eighth Duke for only a short time and when he died in 1892, his son and heir Charles returned from America and began an energetic programme of work on the palace and park.

2.3.6 The end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (1892-present)

Charles, ninth Duke of Marlborough, was passionate about trees and between 1893 and 1919 he planted a coniferous/deciduous mix of some 465,000 on the Blenheim Estate. He also cleared away some of the more overgrown Victorian shrubberies beside the Palace to make way for new gardens in the 'modern' style. The French landscape architect Achille Duchene was commissioned to create a formal sunken Italian garden below the east front which was finished in 1910 with statuary and complex borders edged with box surrounding an elaborate central fountain. Between 1925 and 1930 Duchene worked with the ninth Duke on transforming the west garden into two French style water terraces.

The proliferation of forestry activity in the Park in the first part of the twentieth century, followed by its decline and the arrival of Dutch Elm Disease in the middle of the century, had a very significant impact on the Blenheim landscape. Amongst its many casualties, Dutch Elm claimed the lives of the Grand Avenue trees which had been replanted by the ninth Duke. The dead trees were felled and replanted with lime from 1977 onwards. During the same period many of the beech trees planted by Brown succumbed in old age to Beech Bark Disease. Thus at the beginning of the 1980s the eleventh Duke of Marlborough, in discussions with the then Countryside Commission, formulated the pioneering idea of producing a landscape planting and restoration plan for the park. Hal Moggridge and Ralph Cobham were commissioned to prepare it and the careful progress of that plan has produced the regeneration of Brown's masterpiece at Blenheim.



The Italian Garden below the east front

2.4 Statements of Value

Methodology

The methodology used to write these statements of value is based on ICOMOS guidelines, together with the guidelines prepared by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund for the production of conservation plans for historic places and the guidance prepared by the Countryside Agency for Heritage Management Plans.

The statements explain why Blenheim has Outstanding Universal Value. The further statements explain its national and local significance. Together they provide the basis for the writing of the management plan and allow policies and priorities to be set which ensure that international, national and local values are conserved for future generations.

The following elements have been considered in assessing the universal, national and local significance and value of Blenheim Palace and Park (see Figure 4: Key Features):

Cultural

- The cultural associations of the site

Aesthetic /Historical

- The Palace
- Built features in the park
- The designed historic landscape setting
- Local history

Ecological

- The value of the site for wildlife
- Quality of the known ecological information

Archaeological

- Early uses of the site
- Archaeological potential
- Quality of the known archaeological information

Social

- Amenity value
- Issues of local identity and pride
- Educational value

2.4.1 Outstanding Universal Value or International Significance

There are cultural, historical and aesthetic reasons why Blenheim is of Outstanding Universal Value.

2.4.1.1 Cultural Value: Links with the Palace and its builder

John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, was a figure of international importance. On August 13, 1704, with the help of Prince Eugene, he won a decisive victory over the French and Bavarian troops at Blindheim, near Hochstadt. After a long campaign in the War of the Spanish succession, it was clear that this battle would decide the future of Vienna and the Empire. In England Marlborough's victory was greeted as the greatest since Agincourt, while on the Continent he was revered for all he had done to save Europe from the dictatorship of Louis XIV. As an expression of the English nation's gratitude Queen Anne bestowed on him the royal property of Woodstock, one of the oldest royal properties set in the heart of a forest, and on this site a colossal palace was erected to honour this great hero.

The palace at Blenheim is an expression of national power, a symbolic statement of military dominance and a work of art. Certain buildings such as temples, memorials, and centres of government have always been surrounded by material symbols and architectural display. These various types of building can be classified as 'intended monuments' of which Blenheim Palace is clearly one, and their cultural value is made even more prominent by a more recent disinclination to create similar buildings. They are, in short, works of deliberate 'historic landmark'. It is clear that Vanburgh, Hawksmoor and Marlborough had in mind the Aristotelian concept of magnificence when Blenheim was conceived, meaning that it was intended as an architecturally distinguished large-scale public building of magnificence (and not for the luxury of the inhabitant). Thus, Blenheim is a building, which together with the Park and accompanying buildings, statuary etc, is intended as a celebratory monument, ultimately to British liberty, and is vested with symbolic significance and manifestly intended to be a permanent memorial.

We ascribe intangible values to a place which reminds us of the magnitude of Marlborough's battle victories and this form of historical association can be strong enough to promote any building – whether modest or magnificent – to the status of a revered monument. At Blenheim, however, we have both an extraordinary piece of architecture and one that, because of its associations with the significant military achievements of the 1st Duke, evokes strong passion and becomes a symbol of cultural identity, to be cherished and celebrated.

Blenheim was also a creation of the Whig dynasty – the dominant political party of the time who believed primarily in civil and political liberty. The party, which rose to dominance in 1688, was supported by many merchants and landowners. Vanburgh and Hawksmoor saw the opportunity to highlight in architectural form the new 'Golden Age' of the Whigs. There was, at least in some quarters of the country, an expectation of architectural supremacy under Queen Anne, echoing the military domination achieved under Marlborough. Ornamentation and landscape played their role in expressing the Whig cause with Blenheim seeking to express freedom and surpass established Tory nobility. Thus the Palace dominates its landscape and was designed to be the focus of all important views and allegorical journeys through the Estate.

2.4.1.2 **Cultural Value: High Park – links to the past**

The UK has by far the greatest concentration of veteran trees in northern Europe, and within High Park, which sits in the south-west section of Blenheim Park, is one of the finest areas of ancient oak-dominated woodland in the country. It is partially descended from the ancient Wychwood Forest, a C12 deer park, and an Anglo-Saxon chase, and is full of veteran trees, many several centuries old. Such ancient woodland, with so many veteran trees, is now a rare landscape phenomenon in northern Europe. Some of the ancient trees are thought to be over 600 years old. This cultural value is enhanced by the fact that natural regeneration of the veteran oaks has been encouraged by the eleventh Duke.



Veteran trees in High Park

2.4.1.3 **Aesthetic/Historic Value: The Palace**

The design of Blenheim Palace illustrates the beginnings of the English Romantic Movement, which was characterised by the eclecticism of its inspiration. Its designers rejected the French classical influence and instead returned to national sources and a love of nature from which to inspire the designs for the new palace. The influence of Blenheim on architecture in the C18 was greatly felt both in England and abroad.

The architectural handling of the palace was intended from the start to convey the magnificence and virtue of its patron. It is a celebration of European Baroque given English expression through its bold square form. Blenheim has what Vanburgh termed his 'castle air', noble and masculine but with a romantic notion of the medieval past, yet all decorated with classical motif. This style evoked medieval forms, the heavy massing of the building and a romantic silhouette but was combined with baroque advance and recession of forms and a sense of theatre to provide a distinct architectural style.

The selection of Vanburgh as architect probably ensured a scheme which had echoes of Castle Howard. The plan format of this type of design had its origins in the royal and private palaces built in Britain since the 1680s, but at Blenheim Vanburgh took it to a new level and enhanced the whole building with military symbolism.

This overall design is one of the unique elements about Blenheim, which gives it universal value. By combining design sources, including Italian Renaissance, English medieval and Elizabethan influences, but adding a romantic element, Vanburgh and Hawksmoor's created the unique qualities of Blenheim.

2.4.1.4 **Aesthetic/Historic Value: Built features in the park**

Blenheim Park is the setting for Blenheim Palace and a number of outlying structures. These are of intrinsic value in themselves, in addition to their role as the focal points of the designed parkland. The Palace and Grand Bridge, both designed by Vanburgh, Hawksmoor's Triumphal Arch from Woodstock town, Hensington Gate and the Column of Victory are an ensemble of English Baroque buildings. Their value derives both from their theatrical splendour and from their association with great European personalities. In addition, the following play a particular role in the parkland landscape:

High Lodge, remodelled by Brown as a castellated romantic house, originally intervisible from the Palace. The Park Farm complex, also by Brown, now surrounded by other later structures. Bladon Bridge, designed by William Chambers who is also responsible for the Temple of Diana in the Pleasure Grounds. The Lince Bridge, probably by Brown together with the elegant Lince House (probably by Chambers).

Two other temples and a grotto in the Pleasure Ground as well as two early iron bridges above and below the cascade. Fair Rosamund's Well and the ha-has

2.4.1.5 **Aesthetic/Historic Value: Designed historic landscape**

The Park

For some 30 years between 1753 and his death, Lancelot (Capability) Brown was unrivalled in the realm of landscape design. He took the foundations for a new naturalistic landscape which had been laid by William Kent and to this he added his own artistic talents, thus creating the 'English Landscape Style' which spread across the whole country and from there into Europe. It was a form of landscape art which, in its organisation of space, was to stretch in its influence well beyond the shores of Britain in the C18 and C19 and Blenheim is a supreme example. The handling of large expanses of water, the creation of dams, the sensitive sculpturing of pastoral landforms and the planting of thousands of trees became Brown's signature and can be seen again and again in the many parks he transformed. Across the channel, examples of 'English Gardens'

began to appear, for example the Englischer Garten created in the heart of Munich in 1789 for the Elector Karl Theodor.

Two interlocking qualities give the landscape of Blenheim its universal significance. It is an exemplar of the English Landscape Style, displaying some of Lancelot Brown's most famous devices, including the magnificent artificial river and lake system. Underlying and united by this design, which he began in 1761, are many elements which Brown retained from the original landscape setting of the Palace.

Lancelot Brown absorbed both the ancient landscape of veteran oaks, and many elements of the grand early C18 formal design into his masterpiece. These elements include:

- The tall stone park wall, following a drawing by Townsend and built at the same time as the Palace, which still encloses most of the 14.5km length of the park boundary.
- Avenues east from the Palace, though not the original trees, still follow the original alignment, and there is a short length of a mainly original lime avenue in the south of Lower Park.
- The 2.25km long Grand Avenue still exists although its layout differs from the original.

This was achieved in such a seamless totality that its overall significance at Blenheim could be overlooked. As Mavor wrote of Brown in his Preliminary Essay to his Guide to Blenheim "some of his most capital performances have been ascribed to chance" (10th edition 1817). Nonetheless the importance of Blenheim Park as an exemplar of Brown's work has been widely recognised internationally.

- Thomas Jefferson, who found the pleasure grounds uninteresting, wrote "the water here is very beautiful, and very grand, the cascade from the lake a fine one". (Memorandums made on a tour of some of the gardens of England 1786).
- Prince Puckler-Muskau's view was that: "One cannot help admiring the grandeur of Brown's genius and conceptions, as one wanders through these grounds: he is the Shakespeare of gardening" (from Tour in Germany, Holland and England 1826-28).

- Dorothy Stroud wrote: "*The damming of this little river to form two great lakes in keeping with the vast scale of the house was one of Brown's masterpieces, and its success is in no small measure due to retaining Vanburgh's bridge*" and "*Contemporary critics were unanimous in their praise of Blenheim*". (Chapter V: Capability Brown 1950).

The numerous early C19 prints and pictures of Blenheim Park, particularly of the surroundings of the lakes north of the Palace, confirm this admiration.

The Pleasure Ground

The Pleasure Ground, which also dates from this phase of landscaping still retains some of the trees which were planted at this time. They have, through maturity, acquired significance in themselves, in particular the Cedars of Lebanon, and some beech although these are now close to the end of their lives.

The Gardens

The surroundings of the Palace were remodelled in the first third of the C20. First, the 9th Duke had the north forecourt splendidly remodelled to a layout believed to have been the original intention. He then retained the French landscape architect, Achille Duchene, to design the formal gardens south-east and south-west of the Palace. These are amongst the finest formal gardens of the early C20 and perhaps Duchene's masterpiece.

2.4.2

National and Local Significance

This section describes the many items of national significance within the park which enrich its universal qualities and which, together with its OUV, have led to Blenheim Palace and Park being designated as a National Heritage landscape in recognition of its outstanding scenic, historic, architectural and scientific interest.

2.4.2.1

Cultural Value

In more recent times, Blenheim has been associated with one of our national heroes, Sir Winston Churchill, who was born at Blenheim in 1874. As Prime Minister between 1940 and 1945, Winston Churchill played a crucial role in bringing the Second World War to a successful conclusion and thus, like his ancestor some 200 years before him, Churchill helped shape the face of Europe.

Academic interest in Blenheim Palace and Park has been evident over a long period and has led to the study of many of its elements and features, particularly in relation to:

- the early history of Wychwood Forest and Woodstock Manor;
- as a subject of conferences, research projects, books and television programmes;
- providing the inspiration for the content and setting of literary works. For example, the Palace together with the 1st Duke of Marlborough was the inspiration which led to the writing of Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift.

2.4.2.2

Aesthetic/Historical Value: Built features in the park

Within the park wall there are 42 listed buildings or structures which are of special architectural or historic interest in a national context and many of these play a significant role in the aesthetic composition of the park landscape.

2.4.2.3

Aesthetic/Historic Value: Designed historic landscape

The Early Landscape

The formally planned landscape of Henry Wise, which ranged across the 2000 acres of parkland, were only just taking shape in 1708. The gardens, even more than the palace were the Duke's passion and in contemporary writings appear to achieve as much respect as the palace. Thus in 1706 the Tory Hearne, recorded the gardens as being '*very extraordinary and to exceed anything of that nature in England*'.

The completeness of records, both drawings and correspondence, related to this first era of Blenheim Park are significant, because they enlighten and enliven both the people and the design of this era. Several features of the early landscape created for the universally significant buildings remain. These include the enclosing brick walls of Henry Wise's early C18 seven hectare kitchen garden, with four 15cm radius semi-circular niches; and a 160m diameter roundel encircled by a ha-ha, shown on a plan of 1709 (attributed to Charles Bridgeman) as The Big (Walnut) Clump. Bridgeman is considered to be the inventor of the ha-ha and this is the earliest known use of the device.

The Lancelot Brown Period

The landscape work undertaken during the Brown period is considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value.

The post Brown period

The 9th Duke who inherited in 1890 and lived at Blenheim until 1935 planted 465,037 trees in Blenheim Park. The significant features of his work are:

- the replanting of the Great Avenue in elm to his own layout (being re-established by the present Duke in lime)
- the large number of oaks north of High Park
- the Edwardian style roundels of blue cedar and purple beech mainly concentrated in the park north of the Palace.

In 1981, the 11th Duke initiated a restoration scheme of the ageing Brownian plantings which represents a significant early example of developing a planned approach to the restoration of an historic landscape.

2.4.2.4

Ecological Value

High Park, together with Queen Pool and The Lake, have high ecological value which is considered to be nationally significant for the following reasons:

- the age of the ancient trees provide rare and valuable habitats.
- at least twelve species of the vascular plant flora and sixteen species of epiphytic lichens are found here and are otherwise confined to undisturbed ancient woodland sites in southern England.
- the invertebrate fauna contains several species associated with dead and decaying wood, including three beetles listed in the British Red Data Book of Invertebrates which documents rare and threatened species.
- the park is a notable site for pseudo-scorpions and supports one of the four known British populations of *Dendrochernes cyrreus*.
- the lakes represent some of the largest areas of open water in Oxfordshire and as such are of regional importance as a site for breeding and wintering wildfowl.

- the park supports a variety of habitats including areas of heathland, acid and calcareous grassland.
- the park provides the location for research by national experts, particularly Entomologists and veteran tree specialists.

2.4.2.5

Archaeological Value

Blenheim Park contains a diverse range of monuments dating from the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods, and these can be identified as being 'significant', 'important' or 'very important'. Together they represent long running themes of land division, religious practice and the organisation of country estates. Five of these have been recognised and protected as Scheduled Monuments. These significant monuments have intrinsic value as heritage assets with both amenity and academic value. When considered as a group they add many layers to the historical story of the site and are of interest because of the way in which the parkland landscape has helped them survive. Examples include:

- Grim's Ditch, the remains of countywide system of ditches and banks
- the line of the Roman road, Akeman Street, at the northern end of Great Park
- the motte and bailey castle;
- the remains of the old Woodstock Palace;
- the Romano-celtic temple.



Archaeological features appear throughout the park

Some of these have the potential to form additional visitor attractions and destinations either because they can be readily seen and appreciated or because they can be presented by use of on-site interpretation. For example there remains a fragment of Henry II's (1133-89) gardens at Rosamund's Well on the north bank of The Lake and signs of a mill race remain below water level in Queen Pool. However, any increased access to, and interpretation of, these features must be done in a sustainable way to ensure that conservation of the features in question is not compromised. The north, west and east boundary of the royal hunting park in the middle ages was the same as today, between the middle of its west side and its south-east corner.

2.4.2.6

Social Value: including recreation and education

Visitors

Blenheim is one of our most important and well known visitor attractions, with in the region of 600,000 people with diverse interests visiting per year. These include children and families, those with an interest in the history of architecture and landscape design, international travellers, elderly people, specialist interest groups and the local community. Blenheim is well known throughout the UK and abroad and the results of the public consultation process show that many of its visitors are aware of its World Heritage Site status. The visitor season for the Palace has recently been extended to cover most of the year and the Estate run or host a wide variety of events in the park as well as providing a range of visitor facilities that help to maintain this important recreational resource.

Local community values

Blenheim has also enjoyed a long association with the local communities that surround it, benefiting both the lives of the individuals who live there, and the health of the local economy. The Estate is an important local landowner, generating both jobs and visitors who support local businesses.

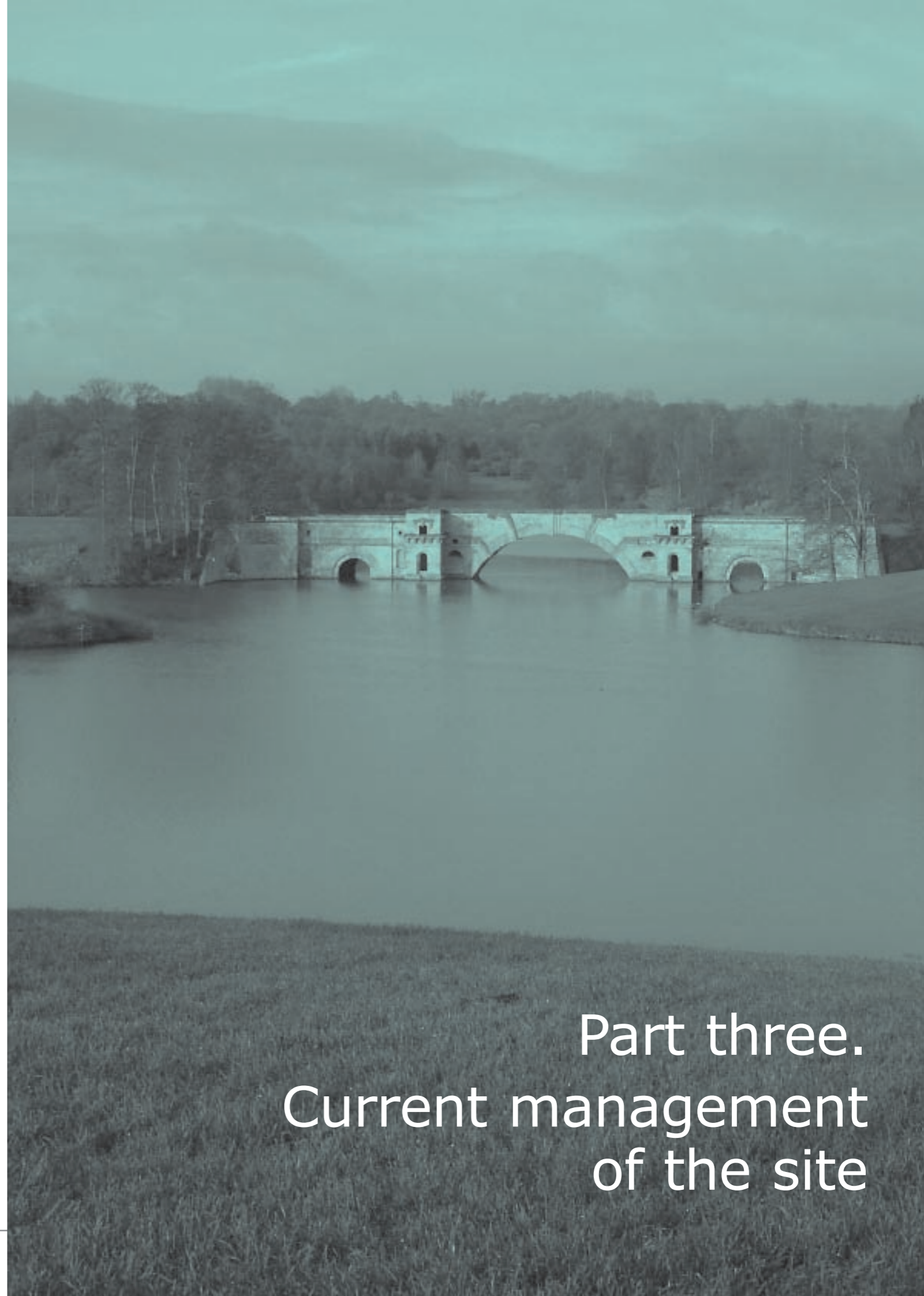
The results of the questionnaire show that there is a keen sense of pride and community interest in Blenheim. The numbers of visitors have a positive impact on the local economy (catering, accommodation, shops, transport etc) and the Estate is a significant employer in the area. A system of walking passes is also currently available to residents of Woodstock and Bladon allowing free access to the Park at specified times.

Educational value

Blenheim has a very well established education centre and is a valued resource for many local and regional schools and educational establishments. The Estate have won the Sandford Award every year since its inception in 1982 for the very high standards of heritage education offered by dedicated education staff.

Authenticity and integrity

The Palace and Park survive remarkably intact, and are exceptionally well documented. Major interventions, such as the remodelling of the landscape by Brown, are similarly well documented and palimpsests of earlier schemes survive under the remodelling. Disease and time have caused some loss of original tree specimens but these have been replanted with the same species where possible and appropriate. Because of climate change and especially the greater incidence of drought, adjustments are having to be made to the mix of native species used in conserving the park landscape.



Part three. Current management of the site

Part three. Current management of the site

3.1

Ownership and management responsibilities

The Blenheim Estate, which includes the Palace, the park and all its associated buildings has been the home of the Dukes of Marlborough for almost three hundred years.

The whole of the World Heritage Site is owned and managed by the Blenheim Estate who have the primary responsibility for its management. It does, however, operate within national planning legislation as delivered by West Oxfordshire District Council. English Nature provide advice on the SSSI management; the Historic Buildings Inspector at English Heritage, together with the local planning authority Conservation Officer provide advice on management and conservation of listed buildings, and the Countryside Agency advise on issues relating to the national heritage landscape.

In 1984 the Trustees set up a Maintenance Fund which led, in 1985 to the Treasury designating Blenheim Palace, its gardens, grounds and park as conditionally exempt from inheritance tax under Section 31 (c) and (d) of the Inheritance Act 1984. Subsequently, in 2000, the conditional exemption was renewed.

Pursuant to a Court Order made on 22 July 1994, Blenheim Palace, its gardens and the Park surrounding Blenheim Palace (together totalling 2,375 acres) were conveyed by the 11th Duke of Marlborough to the Trustees of the 1994 Blenheim Parliamentary Estates Settlements on 1 December 1994. The Trustees of the Settlement are Lord Edward Spencer-Churchill, Richard Jessel and Alexander Muir. Under the terms of the Settlement, the Duke is entitled to a life interest in the trust. In addition to this, the Blenheim Foundation provides a fund for the conservation of the Palace and its contents in recognition of their value to the general public.

Management of the Estate is overseen by the Chief Executive who is supported by the following:

- Property Director – responsible for all the buildings within the park
- Head of Operations – responsible for the opening of the Palace, Gardens and Park to the public and for overseeing all events, functions and activities
- Rural Enterprises Manager – responsible for the management of the parkland, both ornamental and farmed, and the woodland; also responsible for supporting Operations with regard to event management;
- Head Gamekeeper – responsible for the management of the shoot and its associated landscape needs, together with the control of wild deer and fish management in the lakes.
- Head Gardener – responsible for the presentation of the gardens, pleasure grounds, visitor areas and mowing in the park close to the palace.

This team reports both to His Grace The Duke of Marlborough and to the Board of Trustees.

3.2

Land uses (see Figure 5: Land Uses)

The heritage landscape provides the framework within which the Estate's land uses exist and are managed, e.g. the woodlands accommodate the forestry and shooting enterprises; the lakes and parkland serve as 'hosts' for many recreational activities e.g. fishing, annual horse trials, quadrennial Game Fair etc. In turn the land uses impact upon the landscape, particularly in the case of the shoot, which involves the siting of game copses, cover crops and rearing pens etc., and the ways in which recreational visitors and their vehicles affect both ground surfaces and the enjoyment of key vistas.

Thus the management of this WHS both requires and achieves careful integration of heritage landscape interests (i.e. visual, ecological and archaeological) and contemporary commercial uses of the land. This is a dynamic and highly sensitive relationship of extreme importance: the continuing fulfilment of the WHS designation depends upon it; physically, aesthetically and, most importantly, financially. The on-going care and conservation of the landscape is underpinned by performance of the land uses.

3.2.1

Farming, grazing and woodland

All of the farmed area of the park is held in-hand and managed through a mix of in-house staff and contractors under the control of the Rural Enterprises Manager. The land is mainly laid to grass and is currently extensively grazed by a flock of c1600 sheep managed out of Park Farm. The arable areas in the North Park have reduced over recent years and this trend is likely to continue, although a percentage of arable will probably always form part of the North Park landscape. The grassland near the palace and by the lake is managed by mowing. The Estate staff are currently investigating the potential of the new DEFRA Entry Level and Higher Level Schemes in relation to the enhanced management of the park.

All the park woodlands are included in a Woodland Grant Scheme agreement which runs from 2002 to 2007. Each year an annual programme of thinning and pruning in the park woodlands is agreed under this scheme and the work is undertaken either by contractors or by way of in-house labour. Much of the parkland restoration planting undertaken up to 1997 is now in need of thinning and where pure beech stands have been replanted there is currently a significant problem with squirrel damage which has damaged and deformed many of the trees.

High Park is an area of ancient oak wood pasture which is managed in accordance with an English Nature SSSI agreement with the aim of retaining the wood pasture character and protecting the many veteran trees. Dead wood is generally left where it falls and bracken is controlled through annual rolling, with rides and grassland areas being mowed rather than grazed. During the 1950s an area of conifers were planted in High Park which are at odds with its historic character and nature conservation value.

3.2.2

Pheasant shooting and sporting rights

The Estate run an in-house game shoot of pheasant and partridge, for 8 guns per day over c35 days per year in the season. A small amount of duck flighting over Mapleton Pond and Bladon Lake takes place, together with a low level of deer stalking, mainly for control purposes. Fishing is also permitted on the lake.

Management of the game requires the planting of game cover crops in parts of the park together with the use of some of the woodlands for game rearing and cover. These include the plantations on the ridges of Combe and Icehouse Valley's and the conifer areas in High Park.

Game management practices can have a positive effect on certain types of wildlife who might otherwise not thrive without certain levels of vermin control, while game cover crops can provide food and cover for farmland bird species as well as game birds. The presence of the Head Keeper in the park also has positive security benefits.

3.2.3

Properties

There are several houses and cottages within the park boundary which are either used for Estate staff or provide an income through residential lettings. Park Farm is a commercial centre, where the sheep operation is housed, adjacent to the Blenheim Water bottling plant. The Cowyards, in Low Park, have consent for conversion to office use, beyond which lies the Bladon Chains caravan park (for touring vans) on the eastern-most point of the park, just outside the Park wall and outside the WHS.

3.2.4

Recreational use

Gardens and Pleasure Grounds

Recreational use of the grounds at Blenheim is a long established tradition, with one of the earliest accounts of a visit to the Palace being that of Arthur Young in 1767. The gardens surrounding the Palace, including the Water Terraces, , Rose Garden, Grand Cascade, and the Secret Garden, are currently open to the public between mid February and mid December. A miniature train connects the Palace to the Pleasure Gardens housed in the old walled kitchen garden adjacent to a Butterfly House, antique garden machinery exhibition, maze, mini-golf and adventure play area.

The Park

The park is open every day of the year, apart from Christmas day. As well as providing an opportunity for informal recreation in the form of walking and picnicking, it is also used throughout the year to host a series of activities including sporting events, craft and country fairs, and entertainment events such as music concerts and historical re-enactments.

Functions, catering and retail

Blenheim also offers facilities within the palace, and particularly within the eastern courtyard for corporate entertainment, weddings, events, conferences and product launches. In the Palace areas and the Pleasure Grounds there are also catering and shopping facilities on offer for the general visitors to the site.

3.2.5

Educational use

The Education Service at Blenheim has been running for 24 years and provides a very high quality resource for a variety of educational uses. The Estate employ an Education Officer to run this enterprise and visits are carefully linked to the National Curriculum at all Key Stages together with GCSE, A/S and A level. The Sandford Award, presented to historic houses by the Heritage Education Trust in recognition of outstanding contributions to education, has been held continuously by the Blenheim Education Service since 1982. In addition, the Duke of Marlborough's Annual Heritage Education prizes are awarded each year to enhance the linkage with schools and to encourage follow-up work.



Heather Carter and Chief Executive John Hoy with a model of education officer John Forster, made by one of the visiting school groups

3.3

Planning and policy framework

3.3.1

Planning policy and guidance

The designation as a World Heritage Site carries no specific additional statutory obligations but the status is considered to be a key material consideration by the planning authority in determining planning applications which may affect the site in any way. The significance of both the natural and built heritage at Blenheim is currently protected through a range of existing generic measures put in place by established

planning legislation, policies and practice. Of particular relevance is Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, which endorses the preparation of management plans for all of the UK's World Heritage Sites. PPG 15 also requires the local planning authority to consider including specific planning policies in its Local Plan which will provide effective protection to any World Heritage Site in its area as a key asset to the historic environment.

3.3.2

West Oxfordshire Local Plan policies

The generic policies contained in the Local Plan for West Oxfordshire (adopted 1997) shortly to be replaced by the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (predicted to be adopted 2006), are set out in Appendix 9. Key amongst these policies is: *POLICY BE11 Historic Parks and Gardens Development will not be permitted that adversely affects the character, setting, amenities, historical context or views within, into or from a Park and Garden of Historic Interest:*

- *A register of historic parks and gardens has been produced by English Heritage under the National Heritage Act 1983. They are graded I, II* and II, with Grade I representing sites of international importance. The Register is regularly updated.*
- *There are 16 Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in West Oxfordshire. These are identified on the Proposals Map and are listed in Figure 3.2 [of the Local Plan]. Although the listing of the sites carries no statutory obligations, the Government has advised local authorities to consider the impact of development upon such historic parks and gardens as a material consideration in planning terms and to consult English Heritage on any development proposals that may affect them. Historic Parks and Gardens are an essential part of the nation's heritage, the Council will resist proposals for development that would damage their appearance or character, whether they are registered or not.*
- *In addition to the parks and gardens of special historic interest, Blenheim Palace is also registered as a World Heritage Site. Although no further additional statutory controls follow from the inclusion of a site on the World Heritage List, its inclusion does however highlight*

the outstanding international importance of the site which should be taken into account when considering any proposals likely to affect Blenheim.

3.4

Protection designations of the site and its wider setting

The following statutory and non-statutory designations contribute to the protection of the key features of the World Heritage Site (see Figure 6: Statutory Protections):

- 5 Scheduled Ancient Monuments: SAM 21814 Bowl Barrow; SAM 21837 and 21854 Grim's Ditch; SAM 21815 Roman-British Temple; SAM 21816 Medieval pillow mounds.
- 7 Grade I listed buildings or structures
- 6 Grade II* listed buildings or structures
- 32 Grade II listed buildings or structures
- Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest
- World Heritage Site since 1987
- National Heritage property designated in 1999.
- Site of Special Scientific Interest: covering mainly High Park and the lakes
- Ancient replanted woodland: part of New Park
- Public rights of way across the park
- Site bordered by the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the conservation areas of Woodstock and Bladon.
- The Hedgerows Regulations (1997)

3.5

Financial context and human resources

3.5.1

Financial context

The bulk of the operating income for the WHS comes from:

- visitors through admission fees, catering, retail, corporate use/conferences/weddings and park events;
- bottled water business;
- in-house farming operations;
- income from agriculture and from residential and commercially let properties;
- fishing hire and game shooting days;

It should be noted that the last three of the above items refer to income from the wider Estate, most of which is outside the WHS boundary. Thus, the running of the Palace and Park is funded by income derived mainly from activities on the wider Estate, without which the many conservation activities within the Park wall could not take place. The majority of funding for conservation activities comes from the 11th Duke of Marlborough with some occasional grant support in the form of:

- farm subsidies
- Woodland Grant Scheme
- Grants from English Heritage for specific conservation activities;
- Grant from the Countryside Agency for management plan work.

The Estate continues to manage the property to a high standard, but there is always more conservation work that could be done, if more funds were available. For example, the survey work undertaken for the management plan has highlighted the need to spend very significant sums of money on the Palace alone. Income from recreational use of the WHS varies annually, having an effect on the levels of finance available to spend on conservation work above and beyond annual maintenance operations. Thus major conservation projects are likely to continue to be reliant on Estate activities outside the WHS boundary, as well as additional funding from external sources.

3.5.2

Human resources

The Blenheim Estate employ a large full time in-house team who cover all aspects of the running of the Estate as a whole. These are supplemented by seasonal workers in the visitor areas as well as guides in the Palace. The catering operations are contracted out. Estate Staff receive continued professional development training as necessary. Staff working on the conservation of the built fabric are trained as are those who work on the landscape and within the palace.

Heritage consultants, historic landscape consultants, archaeological consultants and historic buildings conservation architects are all commissioned by the Estate to provide advice on an as-and-when-needed basis. In addition Estate staff work closely with the relevant officers of English Heritage, the

Countryside Agency, English Nature, the Forestry Commission and the local planning authority, as well as the County Council to seek advice and guidance on conservation matters.

3.6 Visitor facilities and management

3.6.1 Who visits Blenheim

Figures for 2004, based on audited ticket sales and head counts show that there were a total of 662,088 visitors to Blenheim. This was made up of:

- 257,000 Day visitors to the Palace, park and gardens
- 121,188 Day visitors to the park and gardens only
- c258,000 Visitors to special events, concerts etc.
- c25,000 Others – conferences, functions etc.

The trend in 2004 was generally static for paying visitors but rising for total visitors through special events etc. Visitor numbers in 1987 are recorded as Palace 358,543 and Park 165,046 (total 523,589) which indicates a significant drop in Palace visitors over the last 17 years – this will have been influenced by national and international events. These figures do not include the many people who enjoy the public rights of way across the park.

3.6.2 Visitor facilities

Within the WHS boundary, the areas which are open to the public are:

- Blenheim Palace, formal gardens and a proportion of the c2,100 acres of surrounding parkland.
- Pleasure Gardens area comprising:
 - antique gardening machinery exhibition and information centre;
 - shop and café shop; miniature train; butterfly house; maze;
 - adventure playground
- Visitor café and restaurant at the Palace plus four further retail outlets
- Parking areas on gravel and grass
- Conference and private function facilities in the courtyard

3.6.3 Other public access

A series of public rights of way run through the park, giving access to the wider area at all times (although it should be noted that these do not give access to the Palace, formal gardens or its immediate environs). These routes are very popular with the local community for walking and exercising dogs (see Figure 7: Public Access and Visitor Facilities).

3.7 Intellectual access: interpretation, education and research

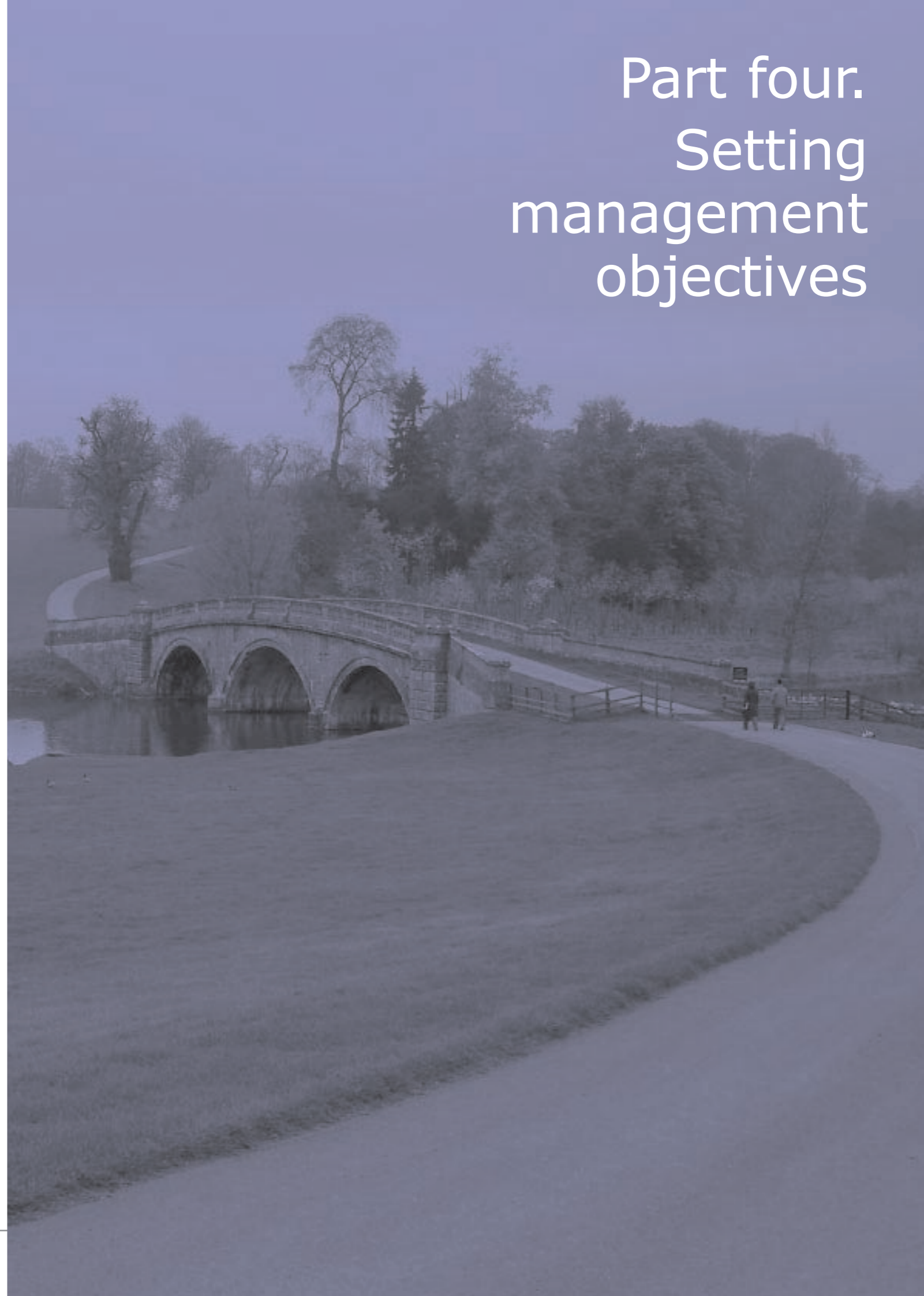
The Estate employ a full time education officer who organises school visits and provides input which includes sessions on heritage and on the World Heritage status of the site. The Education Service at Blenheim have won the Sandford Award for Heritage Education every year since its inception in 1982. In addition, The Duke of Marlborough's Annual Heritage Education prizes are awarded each year to enhance the linkage with schools and to encourage follow-up work.

The Head Gardener has recently completed and opened a visitor information and education centre in the Pleasure Grounds which focuses on the history of gardening and garden machinery.

Archival enquiries are dealt with by the Education Officer. However, the archive has been moved twice in recent years, resulting in a need to improve the levels of cataloguing and storage.

Levels of interpretation focus on the Palace and its interiors. There is an opportunity to do much more in terms of the landscape which has the potential to significantly increase the public's enjoyment and understanding of this important site and this is seen as a priority by the Estate.

Part four. Setting management objectives



Part four. Setting management objectives

4.1

Introduction – identifying the issues

This section of the management plan outlines 22 key issues associated with the World Heritage Site, and identifies 32 objectives designed to address some of these issues and to achieve holistic management of the WHS/HL. To achieve comprehensive management, a thorough understanding of the vulnerabilities and threats to the Site, and the opportunities arising from the status of WHS/HL, as well as a thorough understanding of the resource that comprises the Site, is essential.

The WHS/HL is vulnerable to change but this is desirable in a living landscape. It is the nature, scale and speed of change which can create a threat to the OUV of the site and yet appropriate change is needed in order to improve the condition and presentation of the WHS/HL.

In addition to threats and vulnerabilities there are many opportunities offered by WHS status such as: improving the management and condition of the site; improving its accessibility and use; and contributing to the cultural and economic vibrancy of the local and visiting communities.

The issues presented in the following section have been compiled from a range of information sources such as surveys, research and consultations. The information available in these sources has been analysed for its relevance to the World Heritage Site and the issues that resulted from that analysis have been grouped into the following:

- The Wider Setting and the Local Community
- Conserving the Site and its Features
- Financial Resources and WHS Benefits
- Visitor Management and Education
- Understanding the Site

Within each group a short preamble explores the vulnerabilities, threats and opportunities relevant to Blenheim as a WHS/HL.

4.2

Key management issues

4.2.1

Wider setting and the local community

The site is protected from intrusive development by several statutory and non-statutory designations and by West Oxfordshire District Council's planning control. Currently, the local plan does not contain any policies specifically for the World Heritage Site, as recommended by PPG15.

Issue 1: The WHS may need some specific protection policies. Consideration should be given to including such a policy in the new Local Development Framework document.

The site is bounded by a park wall which, unlike many other World Heritage Sites where 'buffer zones' need to be identified as a protection, affords a high level of containment and protection. Nevertheless, there are areas within the wider setting of the WHS that are more vulnerable than others and where inappropriate development, land management, light or sound pollution would have a significant affect on the views into or out of the WHS.

Issue 2: Some areas outside the WHS need specific levels of protection - Figure 8 identifies these sensitive areas and explains why their protection is important. This protection should be achieved by adopting the objectives in Section 4.6 of this plan and the emerging new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (see Section 3.3.2 above).

The close proximity of Blenheim to its local communities means that it has always had a strong influence on them. The recent public consultation exercise showed that, in Woodstock in particular, there were concerns about levels of traffic and noise from Blenheim during events and a lack of communication and engagement with the local community. The latter appears to be more a perception held by a limited number of the residential population, since the Estate are active members of the local business community including the 'Wake Up to Woodstock' group. They also sit on the local traffic forum and meet regularly with members of the Town Council.

Issue 3: Communication with the local residential community could be improved. Ways to improve this should be explored, particularly in relation to the main concerns of traffic, parking and noise.

4.2.2

Conserving the Site and its Features

4.2.2.1

Archaeology

The report by Wessex Archaeology shows that, for a site with such a long history, the archaeological resource at Blenheim is potentially very rich.

It is possible that, given a greater level of investigation, features such as the motte and bailey, and Woodstock Palace may be shown to be of greater significance than that given to them at the present time.

Issue 4: The archaeological resource would benefit from a greater level of study which would then inform conservation management and provide potential opportunities for education and interpretation. Some outreach work involving the general public or schools might help attract grant aid.

4.2.2.2

Buildings and built features

The Blenheim Estate have committed significant funds to the conservation of its buildings over many years. Despite this, the recent condition survey has detailed repairs and conservation needs estimated at costing many millions of pounds.

Issue 5: The Estate need to attract funding to help support conservation activities, particularly on the Palace, and also to protect and enhance its investment and income to ensure these activities can carry on in the future.

Issue 6: The letting of property on the wider Estate makes an important contribution to Estate income and is likely to need to continue into the future. Within the WHS, the main issue with regard to management is to ensure that historic details and vernacular character are conserved, and that any new uses do not conflict with heritage status of the site. For example, the siting of the bottling plant in the centre of the park, together with the routing of lorries through the main visitor areas is an issue which needs consideration both in terms of aesthetics and conservation of historic structures.

4.2.2.3

Historic landscape

The historic landscape of the park has, since the early 1980s, benefited from the

development and implementation of a conservation and restoration plan. This has delivered some significant results but there remain several issues which are currently preventing the restoration from progressing further in certain areas of the park.

Issue 7: Implementation of thinning programmes and diversification of species affected by squirrel damage need to be addressed in the near future.

Issue 8: Game management within the park needs to consider: (i) landscape impacts when placing game cover crops; (ii) long-term desirability of removing the conifer content from High Park; (iii) the need to re-address the management of woodland clumps in the Great Park to improve levels of undergrowth to provide low ground warmth; and (iv) the impact of tree planting on the historic character of the Combe and Icehouse Valley's, as well as greater diversity in the plantations.

Issue 9: The removal of silt from Queen Pool has been a long held desire, and as time progresses, will become more of a priority. Meeting the demands of the Reservoir Act, together with the need to conserve the underwater archaeology, and the wildlife value of the open water, will all impact on what can be achieved.

The gardens and pleasure grounds (see Figure 3 for boundary) surrounding the Palace were not included in the original restoration programme, although advice from Moggridge and Cobham has been given on enrichment of the arboretum, and on opening up vistas from the gardens. Nevertheless, the gardens would benefit from a planned management regime which is informed by historic precedent and character.

Issue 10: The gardens would benefit from the development of an action plan for the future, based on a sound knowledge of its history. This should include restoration of some features alongside the continued development of new ones.

Issue 11: The effects of climate change on the potential to extend the growing season may have an impact on land management practices, while its impacts on the restoration of the historic parkland features need to be addressed and responded to appropriately.

4.2.2.4

Nature conservation

A significant part of the park at Blenheim is covered by a SSSI designation. This includes two broad habitat types – lowland wood pasture and parkland (covering High Park and The Linces); and eutrophic standing water (covering The Lake and Queen's Pool). English Nature consider these areas to be in a favourable nature conservation condition. Outside the SSSI area there is a less complete record of the wildlife interest in the Park.

Issue 12: Adjusting management of the SSSI could benefit the wildlife qualities of the area. Consider a long-term programme to remove conifer blocks; introduce some form of grazing; and continue to retain some of the fallen deadwood left lying on the ground.

Issue 13: Knowledge of the wildlife value outside the SSSI is limited. Consider commissioning a wildlife survey and setting up a programme of monitoring.

4.2.3

Financial resources and WHS benefits

Funding the work required to care for and manage the WHS is the responsibility of the Duke's of Marlborough and the Estate's Board of Trustees. Income is derived from a variety of sources, of which tourism and recreation is a vital element. Because the park and palace have been visitor attractions for many years, it is difficult to identify or quantify whether it derives any additional benefit in terms of visitor numbers from being a WHS. The Estate prefers to retain responsibility for funding rather than look for grant assistance and therefore must adjust what can be achieved annually based on visitor income for the year.

Issue 14: The amount of conservation work identified in the building condition survey, and to a lesser extent, in the historic landscape restoration plan, far exceeds the annual budget available for conservation work. The Estate will therefore need to promote its visitor attractions and events, protect its investments, attract grant funding and look at the possibility for enabling development on the wider Estate in order to complete the major capital works identified in the condition survey. There will also be a need to prioritise the work and produce an action plan.

4.2.4

Visitor management, access and education

Blenheim is an important and popular visitor attraction

Maintaining visitor numbers is vital to the economy of the Blenheim Estate. However, their management in terms of flows and circulation could be improved to reduce the impact on the heritage assets; to reduce the impact on the local community; and to improve the experience for visitors. Moving the car parking away from the Flagstaff Gate and the Grand Bridge would, from cultural and visual perspectives, be very advantageous.

Issue 15: Recreational use brings several issues: car parking on site needs rethinking, along with improvements to traffic circulation, particularly on event days, the resolution of which will require working in partnership with the local community. There are conflicts regarding traffic in Woodstock on event days – difficult for residents but commercial outlets enjoy increased custom. A visitor management and traffic flow strategy is therefore a priority and is currently underway .

Public access is delivered in several ways: regular paid opening between February and November; park walking permits for local residents; and a network of public rights of way across the park.

Issue 16: The Estate experience trespass off the rights of way network which has an impact on management practices, and also reduces potential income from paying visitors. In a move to reduce these problems, notices requesting users remain on the paths coupled with the closure of some unofficial access points into the park have met with local concern.

The Education Service is very busy and very successful, delivering a high quality package of visits to schools and educational establishments from a wide catchment area. The Education Officer is also responsible for the Palace archives, but the schools work takes the majority of his time available. This means that intellectual access to the archives held at the Estate is very limited, although there is a significant Blenheim collection deposited at the British Library. While education for schools and colleges is very well served, there remains great potential to improve and develop interpretation and information for general visitors, both in the Palace and in the grounds and parkland

Issue 17: The Education Service is very well run and delivers high quality education for schools and colleges. More interpretation and education needs to be considered for the general visitor of all ages. There may be opportunities for schools and colleges to contribute to a wildlife survey or archaeological recording as part of the educational experience at Blenheim.

Issue 18: Access to the archives which are retained at Blenheim are dealt with via enquiries to the Education Officer and are thus limited by the time available, reducing opportunities for intellectual access. The archive is stored in a secure part of the Palace, but would benefit from the provision of a proper room and improved cataloguing.

4.2.5

Understanding the site

It has already been noted above (issues 4 and 12) that further research and recording of the archaeological and wildlife record would improve the understanding of the historical and environmental values of the WHS. Improvements in the access to the archives will increase intellectual access (issue 17). Further studies on traffic flows and visitor circulation has the potential to improve conservation of the heritage fabric, enhance the visitor experience and reduce visitor impacts on the local community (issues 14 and 15). In addition, the following activities would improve understanding of the site:

Issue 19: Architectural measured survey drawings are lacking for all the significant buildings and these could be drawn up on an incremental basis.

Issue 20: A visual survey of views from the Palace out of the park would help identify the most vulnerable areas in the wider setting (see Section 4.1.1 above and Figure 8).

Issue 21: The current Duke has been responsible for a major restoration project in the park and this should be recorded for the archive in the form of a map and a note on his thoughts about the project.

Issue 22: Key documents and maps should be reproduced to help with this long-term conservation, to improve research access to the material and to allow security copies to be deposited off-site

4.3

Vision for the Future including the Estate's objectives

4.3.1

The vision

The Blenheim Estate aims to maintain and preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance, values and character of the WHS, whilst continuing to provide a home for the Dukes of Marlborough, and a high quality visitor experience for future generations. To achieve this it will:

- maintain and manage the Palace and Park to preserve and enhance the character of the heritage property, and, where necessary repair significant buildings or replant parts of the park in accordance with the objectives of this plan.
- use management practices that are consistent with the above and which are designed to conserve the heritage qualities of the plan area and its OUV (described in chapter 2) through appropriate and sustainable policies and practices.
- protect the existing opportunities for public access including existing public rights of way within the Park the access arrangements to the Palace and grounds.
- enhance the qualities of visitor facilities and achieve new levels of excellence in visitor management and experience as one of the UK's top tourism destinations.
- interpret and present the history of Blenheim to a larger and more diverse audience, and continue to promote high quality education programmes.

The vision underlies the management of the Estate and indicates the balance which will be struck between different interests.

4.3.2

The Estate's philosophy of ownership and objectives

The Blenheim Estate is privately owned, and its quality is the creation of successive generations of the Spencer-Churchill family. First and foremost it remains, therefore, a family home. Each member of the family to a greater or lesser degree has, and will continue to make, their contribution to the Palace, the Park and the wider Estate. The objectives of the Duke of Marlborough and the Trustee's, as owners, are to do their best in changing times to direct and foster the continued development and enhancement of all aspects of the Estate as a profitable business and a living breathing entity, respecting all that their predecessors have achieved. The Estate recognise that the management plan is a living, evolving, flexible document which will need to be regularly monitored and reviewed, and which may need to be altered or amended if circumstances or funding dictate. It accepts that there may be appropriate change in the nature, scale and timing of any work, which may follow from social, environmental or economic forces, as long as the change accords with the general aims and objectives of this plan.

The key management objective is to produce sufficient income and enhance capital assets to provide for the family's needs and to protect and secure the heritage property with all its qualities in accordance with the wishes of its owners. There is a considerable cost involved in managing the Palace and Park in accordance with the aims and objectives of this plan, including the action plan contained in Part Five. The Estate derives its income from a variety of sources including agriculture, commercial forestry, property lettings and particularly from leisure and entertainment facilities. The majority of this income is generated outside the boundary of the WHS and thus the wider estate plays a major role in supporting conservation activities within the park wall. A material change in the level of income would therefore lead to the need for a review of the plan.

Members of the Steering Group recognise that the conservation of the heritage

property on the Estate can only be achieved if Blenheim remains a viable business entity maintaining existing enterprises and initiating appropriate new developments. They also recognise that the use and enjoyment of the Palace and the Estate as the family home by the Duke of Marlborough, his predecessors and successors is a key element to the successful conservation of the heritage quality of Blenheim.

4.4

Overarching long-term management objectives

The Vision for the future of Blenheim Park is supported by the following management objectives which address the 22 key issues identified above.

These 33 objectives are intended as a long-term guide to the future management of Blenheim Park for both the Estate and the external organisations with an interest in the WHS and as such will remain relevant to all future revisions of the management plan. They take into account the requirements of the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, guidelines on the preparation of heritage management plans issued by the Countryside Agency (Nov 2004), advice contained in Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage sites (B Feilden and J Jokilehto 1993), *Informed Conservation* by Kate Clark (English Heritage) and recently published management plans for UK World Heritage Sites.

The order in which these objectives are numbered is not significant. Where an objective is divided into two parts, a) and b), these relate to the different focus of managing a national heritage landscape (a) and a world heritage site (b). Where no such division is made, a single objective is suitable for both designations.

Objective 1a: Maintain, repair and preserve Blenheim Palace and maintain and preserve Blenheim Park and grounds and pleasure grounds occupied with Blenheim Palace as required by the undertakings for the conditionally exempt estate.

Objective 1b: Maintain, conserve and enhance the OUV of the World Heritage Site.

At Blenheim the OUV has been identified as cultural, historic and aesthetic, the three being interwoven together in the form of the buildings, the landscape, the people who created them and the reasons for their creation. In addition, the Palace has been both a family home and a very public monument for over 300 years. All future proposals and decisions should be assessed for their contribution to, or impact upon, this objective.

Objective 2: Adopt the management plan as the framework for all plans, policies and decisions relating to the World Heritage Site.

For this plan, together with the supporting topic plans, to be effective it should be adopted by His Grace The Duke of Marlborough and by the Trustees and by the management team at Blenheim as the key document which will guide future strategic planning on the site. This is also true of the following organisations:

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
- The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- The Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- English Nature
- The Countryside Agency
- Oxfordshire County Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council

Endorsement of this management plan does not affect the statutory obligations under which these bodies operate.

Objective 3: Ensure that all uses, activities and developments within the WHS are undertaken in a sustainable manner and to the highest possible standards.

The Countryside Agency defines sustainability as adopting an approach which 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future'. It relates to social, economic and environmental considerations, while the cultural WHS status of Blenheim also brings a need to consider cultural sustainability. The idea of sustainability will be embedded in all aspects of the management, promotion and development of Blenheim.

Social Sustainability

Blenheim contributes to social progress and inclusion through its Education Service and through continuing to offer widespread access to the WHS both through paid visits and via the public right of way network. Through its wide range of events over the course of each season it offers opportunities for many different interest groups to visit and enjoy the WHS on different levels. It also provides a source of work for the local community.

Economic Sustainability

If Blenheim is to have a sustainable future it must have a strong and sustainable economic base. Thus effective business management must balance investment with spending to ensure long-term economic health. Business management has become more established at Blenheim over the past two years, with the appointment of a Chief Executive and a senior management team.

Environmental Sustainability

The idea of environmental sustainability is to ensure that what we have today is passed on to future generations in at least the same, if not a better, condition. The effect of visitors to Blenheim, in terms of the type of visit, and the facilities on offer, affects the ability of the site to absorb the pressures placed upon it. These include physical damage, noise, visual intrusion, traffic flow and congestion, floodlighting and fireworks. The Blenheim Estate will continue to strive to minimise these impacts on the fabric, wildlife and character of the site by careful planning and adequate communication.

Cultural Sustainability

It is important to consider the cultural qualities that give Blenheim its OUV in whatever management actions are taken in order to benefit the present generation and to pass these cultural values on to future generations.

Objective 4: Promote the need for special treatment and a unified approach by central government departments, agencies, local authorities and other statutory bodies with responsibilities for making and implementing policies and undertaking activities that may affect the WHS / Heritage Landscape.

Funding of the site is almost entirely by the wider Blenheim Estate. However, the World Heritage Site can be significantly affected by decisions taken by external agencies. These include the local planning authority, traffic management, water management and agricultural / environmental support schemes. To ensure the future success of the WHS and its sustainability it is important that all bodies making decisions that may affect the site appreciate the significance and importance of the WHS and adopt a co-ordinated approach to their policies and projects. The recognition of this management plan by the statutory authorities will help achieve this.

Objective 5a: Maintain public access to the site as per the undertakings for the conditionally exempt land.

Objective 5b: Enhance public access where possible sustainably and ensure awareness of access opportunities, resources, education programmes and Outstanding Universal Value.

Guidance is available to owners and managers of World Heritage Sites which proposes increasing public awareness of the site and its value and ensuring access. Thus Blenheim is part of a larger group of UK World Heritage Sites which may collectively benefit from promoting the concept of world heritage, as well as being a member of the international community of World Heritage Sites which itself presents opportunities to forge links between similar sites across the world. It is also considered important to promote educational and intellectual access to the knowledge and historical resources held at Blenheim. Educational access is already very well catered for and needs to continue, while site interpretation for visitors, particularly to the Park, could be improved.

Objective 6: Blenheim Estate should continue to identify and monitor potential risks/threats to the WHS and ensure that appropriate plans and strategies are drawn up and implemented to mitigate for these threats.

Risk Preparedness

World Heritage Site owners and managers are encouraged by UNESCO to consider issues of risk preparedness at their site, and guidelines have been drawn up to cover this. Potential risks to the site include biological epidemics (DED, beech bark necrosis etc), flooding, storms, fire, security, health and safety, air pollution and weather conditions, and aircraft accident. Blenheim Estate already work closely with its appropriate partners on strategies to implement in the event of some of these.

In the parkland, changes in agricultural use or issues such as the 2001 Foot and Mouth outbreak may have major impacts. It is already clear from recent experience with newly planted parkland trees being affected by drought, and burgeoning populations of squirrel, that climate change may also have a profound affect on the character and content of the historic landscape. Blenheim will need to monitor climate change indicators and regularly review predictions on possible future patterns for climate change to enable the development of long-term strategies that ensure the significance of the site is not compromised by climate change. It may be necessary therefore to adjust species choices and increase diversity of planting in the park to minimise the risk.

Fire/bomb prevention measures and emergency procedures have been developed for the Palace and its immediate environs, together with a salvage plan for the Palace which is currently under review with the Fire Brigade. Events in the park contain policies for risk preparedness and crisis management and there is an overall joint emergency services response plan for major incidents to cover the Palace and the Park. Security procedures for the Palace and its collections are in place.

It would also be appropriate for the Estate to prepare risk reduction strategies in relation to planning issues, changes in funding structures (for example in agricultural support), and pandemics or disease spread which may affect the flora and fauna of the WHS.

Detailed Objectives

The following, more detailed, objectives provide guidance on how to deliver the main aims and overarching objectives of this management plan.

4.5

Objectives for the wider context

4.5.1

The setting of the WHS

The relationship between a World Heritage Site and its setting is an important one in both the World Heritage convention and in the UK. In cultural heritage planning policy generally in this country, the setting of a WHS is recognised as being a material consideration. The guidance contained in PPG15 gives support to the concept of setting and encourages local planning authorities to consider adopting policies to safeguard the settings of World Heritage Sites. The sensitive areas are identified on Figure 8.

The WHS at Blenheim is enclosed by a park wall and is surrounded by a patchwork of protective designations including an AONB and conservation areas. Given firm implementation, policies are in place to provide effective protection to the wider setting of the Blenheim WHS. Protection of the setting of the WHS. Figure 8 aims to provide guidance on the implementation of these policies, by identifying particular areas of vulnerability and it is recognised that in the areas not identified in Figure 8, the Park Wall provides an obvious barrier of protection in the context of the WHS setting.



The park wall forms a well-defined boundary to the WHS

Objective 7: Maintain the park wall as the boundary to the World Heritage Site and as the historic physical boundary to the park.

Objective 8: Ensure that Blenheim is adequately protected from development that is incompatible with the unique status and character of the World Heritage Site / Heritage Landscape.

Objective 9: Maintain a high quality environment for Blenheim Palace by promoting the highest possible standards of design, materials and execution for repair and renovation, new development and alterations to existing buildings, that may impact on the World Heritage Site. These should respect the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

Objective 10: West Oxfordshire District Council will ensure that appropriate policies to protect the WHS are included in the Local Development Framework, and to encourage adoption of this management plan as a material planning consideration.

4.5.2

Relationships with the local community

Since the change in management structure at Blenheim two years ago the Estate have sought more communication with the local community. The first phase of public consultation for this plan showed that this is something which local residents are keen to see more of.

Objective 11: The Estate will seek to engage with the local community through a regular and structured dialogue so that they can understand how the local community perceive and value the Estate, whilst offering information on the WHS status and the importance of the site locally.

4.6

Conserving the Site and its Features

4.6.1

Conserving the archaeological heritage

4.6.1.1

Current condition

An assessment of the condition of the archaeological interest at Blenheim is given in the survey report by Wessex Archaeology (*Heritage Management Plan, The Blenheim Estate Oxfordshire, Wessex Archaeology, March 2005*). This categorises the main sites into three broad condition types: stable, threatened and destroyed/eroded. Of the 34 sites studied, the majority are stable. These are considered to be well preserved and under no imminent threat.

Based on their current condition, no change in land management is recommended. These are (WA numbers given in the Wessex Archaeology report):

- WA2 Pillow Mound
- WA9 Akeman Street
- WA11 Chalbury-Arnott pipeline
- WA23 Woodstock Palace
- WA24 Fair Rosamund's Well
- WA26 Site of Medieval Watermill
- WA30 Pipeline
- WA33 Post medieval enclosure
- WA34 State Garden, Great Parterre
- WA36 Site of Kitchen Garden
- WA40 Park boundary at Blenheim Park
- WA42-WA46 Earthworks
- WA48-50 Earthworks
- WA53 Cobbled surface

Threatened sites are defined as those under direct threat from the type of land management currently practiced. In these cases, management recommendations are given to address the specific impacts observed. These sites are:

- WA5 Bronze age bowl barrow
- WA6/7 Grim's Ditch
- WA8 Romano-celtic temple
- WA21 Adulterine motte and bailey castle
- WA22 Medieval pillow mounds
- WA25 Medieval round enclosure
- WA35 Post-medieval trackway
- WA37 Pillow mound
- WA38 Deer leap
- WA47 Bank and ditch
- WA52 Mapleton Well

Two sites, a prehistoric enclosure and part of the medieval park pale, appear to have been largely eroded. The 34 sites looked at by Wessex lie across the whole area and are mainly under grass or in woodland. The presence of trees on some of the sites raises a question of conflict between the needs of the designed historic landscape and those of the remains of earlier historic interest. At present there is no interpretation of the monuments to the public.

4.6.1.2

Management objectives

Objective 12a: To continue to maintain Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the satisfaction of English Heritage, following a policy of minimizing ground disturbance, or tree planting, over sensitive archaeological remains as much as possible.

Objective 12b: To improve the management of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the satisfaction of English Heritage and the local authority.

Objective 13: To discuss with the County Archaeologist or a bona fide archaeologist appropriate management of any newly discovered sites and to report all archaeological finds to the County Sites and Monuments Office or Historic Environment Officer.

4.6.2

Conserving the architectural heritage

4.6.2.1

Current condition

(NB Drawing references in the text refer to drawings in the separate fabric report. Interiors have not been included in fabric report).

Blenheim Palace

Parapets: One of the principal concerns with regard to Blenheim Palace is the condition of the high level masonry. Around many of the roofs there are parapet walls, some of which are pierced to form a balustrade. The parapets are exposed to the weather on both sides and are prone to movement from thermal expansion. Further, it is clear that iron cramps are present in the parapets and as these have corroded they have started to lift and fracture the coping stones. The sections in poorest condition are those on the Kitchen Court and Stables Court Pavilions. Areas of concern are shown diagrammatically on drawings nos. 5290/04, 05 and 06.

External Walls: The stonework below the parapet was also constructed with iron cramp fixings. Where water has penetrated the stonework, and the lead casing around the iron cramps, corrosion has set in. The expansive action of the corrosion has caused a number of the stones to spall and in places has lifted bed joints in the masonry. This is particularly evident in some of the high level structures - such as

the four principal towers and circular chimney towers - and in the cornices where stonework has spalled. Areas of concern are shown diagrammatically on drawings nos. 5290/07, 08 and 09.

Statuary: The carved decorative detail of the column capitals, pediments and statuary around the Palace presents a particular cause for concern. The carved elements are a significant part of the architectural design of the building and their erosion, and in places loss where fragments have fallen away, detracts from the architectural splendour of the building and presents a health and safety hazard. With the finely carved elements - such as the lions over the courtyard gateways and the captives on top of the north pediment - it will be important to ensure that there is a good record of the work to enable their re-carving at a future date. The policy on conservation and replacement of such statuary will need careful consideration. Conservation of the six terracotta statues, positioned on the north front by the 9th Duke, was in hand at the time of writing the report. It is currently planned to erect replicas on the parapet in due course.

Roof Finishes: A regular system of inspection and maintenance of the roof finishes is in place. This is an invaluable part of the overall maintenance regime for the building. Nevertheless a few roof areas stand out as candidates for re-roofing in the medium term. These include some of the lead roofs on the Kitchen Court, the slate roof over the Gift Shop and the slate roof over the garages. Many of the other defects in the roofs are more localised and relate to the condition of the various box and parapet gutters. In a number of such gutters the lead-work has ridged and cracked and been patched. As the action has repeated itself the time has come for replacement of some of the lead-work. One of the principal areas where the gutters need attention is around the Great Hall. The lead gutters are also suffering from acid etching from rainwater runoff from the slate roofs. In places the etching is now sufficiently severe that replacement of the lead will be necessary in the short to medium term. However, the provision of sacrificial flashings, to counteract the effects of the acid etching, will help to prolong the life of the lead elsewhere.

Roof Lights: There are a number of roof lights, some of timber and some metal. Generally the timber roof lights require repair or replacement having been effected, over time, by the weather in their exposed locations. Conservation of the metal roof lights - generally lying above stairwells - is becoming necessary in the short and medium term as a function of the glazing putty failing. Provision of safe access for both repairs and subsequent maintenance needs careful consideration. The roof lights over the small projecting bay in the west inner court are in extremely poor condition and require attention as a matter of high priority.

Rainwater Pipes: The rainwater disposal around the Palace is in part visible - where there are external rainwater pipes - and in part concealed where gutters and pipes are built within the Palace walls. Past blockages of these built-in rainwater pipes have caused damage to the fabric and have been difficult to attend to in view of the inaccessibility of the rainwater pipes. A plan is needed to mark up the location of all such internal rainwater pipes and a programme of regular testing should be instigated to ensure they are functioning properly. Where repairs are necessary a policy is needed on whether or not to reinstate masonry or provide access panels to the embedded rainwater pipes.

Windows: The majority of the windows around the Palace are of sash window format, many being extremely large. In general, those on the south and west elevations, catching the prevailing weather, are in worst condition and many require repair as a matter of high priority. The location and urgency for repair is shown diagrammatically on drawings nos. 5290/10, 11 and 12. Included in the consideration of windows are the glazed enclosures on the Clock Tower staircase and at the top of the north-east and south-east Towers. These all require attention, in particular the timber enclosures to the Clock Tower staircase.

Steps: The steps on the south front are in particularly poor condition having moved significantly. They are thought to have been bedded on a relatively mobile core and means to re-set the steps will need to be carefully

considered. The steps rising to the North Portico have also moved, but to a lesser extent. For the time being they need to be kept under observation to ensure that they do not present a significant trip hazard.

Services: As a general policy, opportunities should be taken to conceal or re-route, the service cables around the building as and when they arise.

Other: The ceiling immediately above the North Portico should be inspected sooner rather than later, to assess its security, in view of concerns over water ingress.

Grade I and II* Buildings

Of the other Grade I and II* buildings inspected two structures stand out as being in need of significant repairs: the **Grand Bridge** and **New Bridge**. In both cases water penetration through the bridges has caused saturation of the facing stonework which has consequently decayed. On New Bridge a small section of abutment walling has fallen away. On the Grand Bridge a rather larger section of the facing stonework has fallen away and the abutment walls, that retain a large quantity of built up ground, have a degree of distortion. In particular the north-west wall has a significant bow, in part promoted by the presence of several large beech trees. It is recommended that a Structural Engineer inspects both bridges.

The **Column of Victory** has received repairs to the plinth in the relatively recent past. However, a specialist high level inspection of the statuary and capital stonework is recommended.

The **Temples of Diana and Health** were both the subject of repairs in the relatively recent past. However, there is some concern over the condition of the lead cornice work around the Temple of Diana and in both cases management of the adjacent planting, to keep it out of contact with the building, is needed.

At **Hensington Gate** the principal concern relates to management of vehicle movements through the gateway. At **Woodstock Gate** repair of the stonework that has suffered from past water saturation is the priority in conjunction with reviewing the rainwater disposal. A review of the overall landscape setting of both of the gates should be undertaken.



The Woodstock or Town gate

On the **Water Terraces** there are a number of locations where the stonework is now relatively decayed, particularly on the steps rising on the south side of the water terraces and the coping stones around the basins of water. There is also a structural concern over the retaining wall at the south-west corner of the water terraces where corroding ironwork has spalled the concrete slabs that support the steps between the upper and lower terraces.

Grade II Buildings

Of the Grade II buildings three in particular present themselves as being in need of substantial repairs: the **Kitchen Garden**, **Park Farm Buildings** and the **Cow Yards**. A programme of work to the Cow Yards is currently being put in hand.

The Kitchen Garden wall generally requires maintenance to the wall head. The nature of the defects is relatively repetitive, relating to the poor condition of copings and consequent decay of the bricks below. However, given the extent of the kitchen garden wall remedial action to put the wall heads in sound state of repair will constitute a significant quantity of work. Of particular concern in the kitchen garden is the state of the pedimented gateway by William Chambers. This is in extremely poor condition and potentially hazardous and should represent a top priority for repair works.

At Park Farm Buildings the defects are, perhaps, less conspicuous than at the Cow Yards and Kitchen Garden but this is, for the most part, a reflection that the decay is not yet at such an advanced state. The condition of the rainwater goods around the buildings generally requires attention. Where the rainwater goods have not been performing the masonry has become saturated and has subsequently started to decay. In conjunction with this there are locations where the roofs are in poor

condition. Of primary concern is the inaccessible roof area along the west range of the buildings. The condition of the slate covered open areas needs to be addressed promptly. One of the roof trusses has failed and the supporting masonry where the roofs over-hang the earlier structures is in poor condition. These later buildings created a number of inaccessible roof areas and gutters and as such are an unsatisfactory arrangement.

The condition of the park wall at **Ditchley Lodge** and the walls flanking the gates is particularly poor. The chimney and roof coverings on the Lodge also require attention and it is recommended that consideration be given to the landscaping of the adjacent outbuildings. At **Eagle Lodge** perhaps one of the least satisfactory aspects is the appearance of the extension added in the second half of the 20th century. Again, at **Hensington Lodge** the outhouses and their modification to provide some accommodation does not wholly enhance the setting of the Lodge itself. The principal concerns for the fabric of the Lodge relate to the condition of the masonry chimney stacks and parapet gutters.

Whilst **Woodstock Lodge** has been refurbished relatively recently (to provide accommodation for the Estate Office) it is the case at **Fishery Cottage** that a general overhaul in the medium term might be anticipated. For the time being regular maintenance and patch repairs are recommended. It might also be considered desirable to review the nature of the landscaping around Fishery Cottage which currently includes tarmac areas and a reconstituted stone garage and extension.

The **Swiss Bridge** is significantly different from any of the other structures inspected being primarily of cast and wrought iron rather than masonry. It has been repaired in the past but a number of these repairs have since failed. With some localised repairs in the short term the bridge can be maintained in a serviceable state but in the medium term a comprehensive programme of work should be considered.

Both the **Grotto** and **Rosamund's Well** need to have regular attention to manage the plant growth that takes hold between the stonework of their retaining walls. In both locations it is suggested that an overall review of the landscape setting, to enhance

the presence of these features in the landscape, should be considered.

The **walls** around the courtyard in front of Woodstock Gate and extending from Woodstock Gate to China Corner are generally in need of some masonry repairs in the medium to long term. In some isolated locations removal of plant growth should be undertaken promptly. The scope of work will vary section by section. Parts of the wall closest to China Corner are in poorest condition and will require much attention. Elsewhere only localised stone replacement and pointing works are recommended for the time being. The plumb of the wall should be taken and monitored.

Both listed and non-listed buildings are included in a rolling programme of maintenance, carried out by a mix of Estate staff and contractors.

4.6.2.2

Management objectives

Objective 14: To keep the Palace and its associated buildings and structures in a good state of repair by continuation of the present high level of workmanship, through an annual rolling programme of maintenance, supplemented by a five-yearly fabric inspection of the listed buildings.

Objective 15: To continue to adopt conservation techniques with appropriate materials in the care and management of vernacular and listed buildings, carrying out repairs on a 'like-for-like' basis where possible and appropriate. Specifically, windows and doors should remain of painted timber where this is the original material (changes to UPVC or other modern materials must be avoided), and mortars should be lime-based.

Objective 16a: To seek advice from English Heritage and West Oxfordshire District Council on proposals affecting Grade I and II* listed buildings.

Objective 16b: To seek advice from the Countryside Agency and West Oxfordshire District Council on proposals affecting Grade II listed, and unlisted, buildings.

Objective 17: To commission a measured survey and Conservation Plan for Blenheim Palace and associated buildings.

4.6.3
Conserving the historic landscape

4.6.3.1
Parkland: Current condition

The parkland at Blenheim has undergone a great change over the past 20 years. The balance of arable to parkland has moved much more in favour of parkland grass as the farming operation has been taken in-hand and the bulk of the area given over to sheep grazing. Closer to the Palace the grass is mowed to maintain a higher standard of management. Arable areas are now contained on the periphery of the North Park. An extensive parkland restoration programme, focused on conserving and re-establishing the Lancelot Brown landscape is now in its third decade and has resulted in the replacement of many trees both as individuals and as clumps or blocks of woodland in the areas surrounding the lake, the Grand Avenue and the perimeter belts around the North Park. Running parallel with this programme, the game shooting enterprise has continued, with the result that in some places game cover crops and tree planting has conflicted with the objectives of the parkland restoration plan. These two interests need to be more integrated through species selection and judicious thinning. There is also now a need to carry out general thinning and beating up to protect the continued health of the new trees. Silting in The Lake and, in particular, in Queen Pool has been identified as a major capital project which will need to be undertaken as part of the on-going restoration of the historic landscape. The detailed restoration plan was produced by Hal Moggridge and Ralph Cobham in 1982 and updated in 1997. Together these documents provide full details of the approach to the conservation of the parkland and an analysis of its historical development. They should be read in the context of the other reports prepared by experts in the preparation of this WHS management plan to ensure a wholly consistent approach and avoid conflict.

4.6.3.2
Management objectives

Objective 18a: Conserve the character, layout and features of the designed

historic parkland landscape, giving top priority to maintaining and sustaining the landscape restoration operations implemented since 1982 while sustaining the key views and visits, together with the cyclical management regimes on which the conservation and protection of the historic landscape depends.



Restoration work has been underway in the park for the last 20 years

Objective 18b: Where appropriate, enhance or restore the features of the designed historic landscape.

Objective 19: Consider reducing the impact of game management practises where they may affect the international significance of both the designed historic landscape and the ancient woodland in High Park.

4.6.3.3
Gardens: Current condition

The gardens are managed by a gardens team of ten, led by the Head Gardener. The team are responsible for all the formal areas surrounding the Palace, the Secret Garden, the Rose Garden, the lawns and pleasure walks down to cascade, the walled garden and all its features including the maze, adventure playground and butterfly house. They also supply plants and cut flowers for the Palace and cut the more manicured areas of the park. Maintenance is generally to a very high standard.

This plan has identified a need to provide the gardens with a strategy for the future which is soundly based on a knowledge of its history. The original landscape restoration plan was commissioned for the

park and was not required to cover the gardens and pleasure grounds. However, the gardens have an equally long and interesting history of development and this should be better understood and reflected when future new projects are being planned.

4.6.3.4
Management objectives

Objective 20a: Conserve the structure, character and fabric of the gardens and pleasure grounds (boundary defined on Figure 3).

Objective 20b: Where appropriate, restore important historic features whilst continuing the long tradition of adding appropriate high quality contemporary layouts and plantings.

4.6.4
Conserving the wildlife interest

4.6.4.1
Current condition

English Nature consider the whole of the area covered by SSSI designation to be in an entirely favourable condition and are currently drafting conservation objectives to help guide management of the site. The northern part of High Park is made up of mixed broadleaved woodland, dominated by ancient oak wood pasture with yew, while the southern half has a higher concentration of young conifers, planted in the mid C20. A very high proportion of standing and fallen deadwood is evident, having been left *in situ* on the advice of English Nature. As a guide, the conservation objectives suggest that a minimum of 3 fallen lying trees and 4 standing dead trees should be left per hectare, but a higher number than this would produce increased benefits for wildlife. Considerable success has been achieved in sustaining the population of oaks in High Park through the encouragement of natural regeneration, involving seedling selection and protective fencing against rabbits and mowers. The area is covered by a WGS agreement which supports management for wildlife and includes operations to manage the rides, crush the bracken and to cut back overshadowing of the veteran trees. The ground is currently managed by mowing but would benefit from the instigation of a grazing regime.

The remaining part of the SSSI covers the lakes, standing open water, canals and river system. Together these provide important regional and county sites for breeding wildfowl.

Species of particular interest include Great Crested Grebe and Gadwall. Surrounding the wood pasture and the water are patches of unimproved grassland (acidic, neutral and calcareous), heathland and a small section of semi-natural broadleaved woodland.

There has not been a comprehensive survey of the wildlife interest outside the SSSI areas, so the condition and value of these parts of the park and garden are not known at present.

4.6.4.2
Management objectives

Objective 21a: Identify and monitor the nature conservation interest across the whole site and develop policies, management regimes and monitoring practices that ensure their continued conservation.

Objective 21b: Where appropriate, adjust management practices to be compatible with habitats vital to species of nature conservation interest that are in harmony with the OUV of the Park landscape.

Objective 22: Manage the High Park section of the SSSI in agreement with English Nature. Issues to consider are: (i) a long-term programme to remove conifer blocks; (ii) maintenance of existing open habitats and groundflora; (iii) continue the retention of some fallen deadwood left lying on the ground; (iv) the appropriate continuing encouragement and protection of natural regeneration; and (v) the conservation of veteran oaks through the maintenance of open glades free from potentially competitive plant growth.

Objective 23: Manage the open water sections of the SSSI with the aim of maintaining their marginal habitats by clearing marginal vegetation at the north end and allowing it to develop at the south end, where these activities do not conflict with the character and value of the designed historic landscape.

4.7

Financing conservation activities

Funding for delivery of some of the objectives contained in this management plan can be met through the Estate's annual budget for maintenance and conservation activities. However, with the buildings survey identifying very significant sums of money needing to be spent on the Palace, there will be a need to raise additional revenue to meet all the objectives and operations contained in the work programme.

The key issue is to ensure a steady flow of income for conservation work and the Estate will continue to look at a range of ways of generating income from a variety of sources, relating to both visitor and non-visitor income. These currently include revenue from visitors (general entry and special events), from property letting, commercial interests, running the game shoot, and support from the Blenheim Foundation. In addition, investments will need to be protected and sources of grant aid sought as a means of developing a sustainable financial framework within which conservation work can be carried out. Support of the authorities represented on the Steering Group will be vital in helping identify sources of grant aid, and in helping promote World Heritage Sites as special cases on a national scale - for example, organising collective publicity for all the UK World Heritage Sites, providing financial support for activities directly related to WHS conservation, and lobbying for fiscal changes such as the removal of VAT on WHS conservation work, would all be positive benefits. However, endorsement of this Management Plan does not affect the statutory obligations under which the members of the Steering Group operate.

4.7.1

Management objectives

Objective 24: Develop a sustainable financial basis with which to support the conservation activities within the World Heritage Site, thereby ensuring that adequate management resources and restoration, conservation, maintenance and renovation skills are available.

Objective 25: Maintain a balance between scenic, scientific, historic and architectural features when preparing

budgets to fund conservation activities and prioritise the work in order of most urgent need, without jeopardising the lower priority features/minority interests.

Objective 26: To investigate opportunities for funding, and where appropriate, implementing projects which help deliver this Management Plan, including enabling development where appropriate and consistent with the Management Plan.

4.8

Visitor management, access and education

4.8.1

Current situation

There is a very long history of public access to the palace and park at Blenheim. Its original conception as a public monument meant that the public showed a high level of interest in it from the very beginning and from the mid C18 onwards there are many historical accounts of visitor's impressions. Thus visitors are very much a part of the past and present significance of the site. Future management policies should respect this and place visitors at the core of its activities.

In recent years visitor numbers have been at the c500,000 level, although the numbers of paying visitors has decreased. The existing access arrangements to Blenheim provide a high level of public access to the core of the Estate, with public access to the wider parts of the park provided by the rights of way network. Access falls into six main categories, as recorded on Figure 7:

- Paid entry to the main visitor areas focussed on the Palace
- Public rights of way
- Park permits for local residents
- Recreational and sporting use, including shooting and fishing
- A seasonal programme of organised events in the core areas of the park
- Access offered through the Education Service

4.8.2

Current management**Public rights of way**

The WHS is crossed by a network of public rights of way, which collectively provide access to a large part of the site. Akeman Street, the Roman road that crosses the northern half of the Estate, today forms part of a Promoted Route known as the Oxfordshire Way. A further path, entering the site at Old Woodstock, follows the line of the Grand Avenue north to exit at the Ditchley Gate. Several routes run off this to pass the Column of Victory, to cross Great Park and to pass Park Farm. A route also leads south through New Park into High Park, but this terminates at Springlock Gate. Due to high levels of trespass off these routes in recent years, the Estate have, more recently, commissioned an access audit and as a result have increased signage asking walkers to remain on the designated footpaths so as to prevent damage occurring. A more general permit, issued by the Estate Office, is offered to local residents of Woodstock and Bladon to walk in the park and this is widely used and appreciated, although some residents would like to see it extended.

Access to the Palace and grounds

Blenheim Palace and its grounds are open to the public daily between mid February and mid December. Entry is by paid ticket which can cover simply the park and gardens; or an inclusive price including entry to the Palace. Corporate events, conferences, meetings, parties and weddings may also hire parts of the Palace including the State Apartments, The Orangery and the Campaign Rooms in the Courtyard. A wide range of facilities for visitors are provided, including refreshment areas, shops and toilets. The issues of price and quality of some of these facilities were raised during the public consultation exercise.

Recreational activities in the park

Throughout the season the park plays host to a wide variety of special events including jousting tournaments, a triathlon, horse trials, music concerts and craft fairs. Fishing is also permitted on the lakes, and in the winter season a regular series of weekly game shoots takes place in the Great Park and on the wider Estate.

Education Service

Blenheim is a huge resource for a wide variety of educational uses, available to any type of education group, national and international. This includes pre-school, school and youth groups, colleges and universities, language schools and school language exchanges. The Education Service call on wide range of resources, not only in the Palace, but also in the Gardens, Park and Estate, to provide equally for the National Curriculum and for general interest and leisure visits, or for any combination of these. The Service, now in its 24th year, is led by the Education Officer, an experienced former Headteacher who designs and leads or supports any type of visit. The Service has won the Sandford Prize for Education continuously since 1982, while The Duke of Marlborough Annual Heritage Education prizes help underlie the school links.

The Education Service works not just with the school community, but has diversified into the area of lifelong learning through the creation of a specific website; through frequent speaking on and off-site to a range of audiences; by providing information to and participating in the media; and by accepting its responsibility for wide interpretation of 'education' especially in the adult area. It would be advantageous to continue this diversification further to include the visiting public, where an increased level of information and interpretation, particularly in relation to the landscape, would be very beneficial.

One concern identified in this plan is the potential for this high quality service to be compromised by the demands placed on the Education Officer through his dual role as Archivist. Consideration should be given in the future to the division of these roles.

4.8.3

Management objectives

Objective 27: To develop a Tourism Plan working in partnership with local and national stakeholders, and to consider opportunities to link with other World Heritage Sites internationally.

Objective 28: To continue to provide an integrated approach to the management of visitors in the site that delivers both a high quality, sustainable visitor experience and offers potential benefits for the local community without compromising the Outstanding Universal Value of the site. This should address vehicle and visitor (including pedestrian) flows and car parking, as well as considering any issues raised by the local community regarding event days.

Objective 29: To maintain and manage all rights of way in accordance with statutory duties and to promote all types of visitor access to the heritage property as widely as possible, at both a local and national level.

Objective 30: To maintain and continue to support the educational programmes and facilities provided by the Education Service.

Objective 31: To enhance the visitor experience, particularly in terms of increasing understanding of and appreciation for the landscape and its structures, through the continued provision of improved orientation, information and interpretation.

4.9

Increasing understanding of the site

To manage and conserve the heritage values at Blenheim, policies should be based on, and supported by, a sound understanding of its scenic, scientific, historic and architectural resources. Appropriate, on-going research and survey work will help to support this.



Extract from Lancelot Browns plans for the park

4.9.1

Scenic

A thorough study of the scenic values of the historic landscape was undertaken as part of the Moggridge and Cobham restoration plan, and a map of significant views was produced. This needs to be supplemented by a visual survey of views from the Palace and elsewhere out of the park, which would help identify the most vulnerable areas in the wider setting of the WHS.

4.9.2

Scientific

Blenheim contains a rich ecological resource and has been the subject of a Phase One habitat survey. This was carried out in 1982 and would benefit from being updated. The areas covered by the SSSI have been visited more regularly by English Nature and values recorded. There is a need, however, for a baseline survey of wildlife value across the whole site, which could identify potentials for habitat enhancement and, if appropriate, habitat creation.

4.9.3

Historic

Blenheim benefits from a number of authoritative histories about the site, including those by Hal Moggridge (various papers and articles, in addition to the restoration plan); Bond and Tiller (1987,2000); and Montgomery-Massingberd (2004). The Estate also hold a large archive about Blenheim and the family Estates as a whole, and this is augmented by deposits at the British Library and the County Record Office. However, this plan has identified some gaps and weaknesses in the historic record. These are:

- A need to locate and record areas of potential archaeological interest to add to the understanding of the sites early history.
- The current location and organisation of the archives makes access to it, and the location of key documents, difficult for both staff and researchers. It would be particularly valuable to reproduce the main sequence of historic maps, and certain key documents so that this information could be more widely disseminated. Improvements in the archives would also allow supporting historical documentation to be more easily studied when new plans and developments are proposed.

- The restoration work undertaken by the present Duke over the past twenty years represents an important phase in the history of the park at Blenheim. This work should therefore be mapped and recorded in writing, so that it can become part of the archive of the future.

4.9.4

Architectural

The recent research and publication by Montgomery-Massingberd (2004) stands as an authoritative history of the architectural heritage at Blenheim, based on a wide variety of source material. It is at the more technical level where further information would be most beneficial. Works on the Palace are still guided by the original drawings of Vanburgh, which in itself is both a remarkable heritage value and a cause for concern. It would be helpful to prepare architectural measured survey drawings for all the significant buildings, and these could be drawn up on an incremental basis.

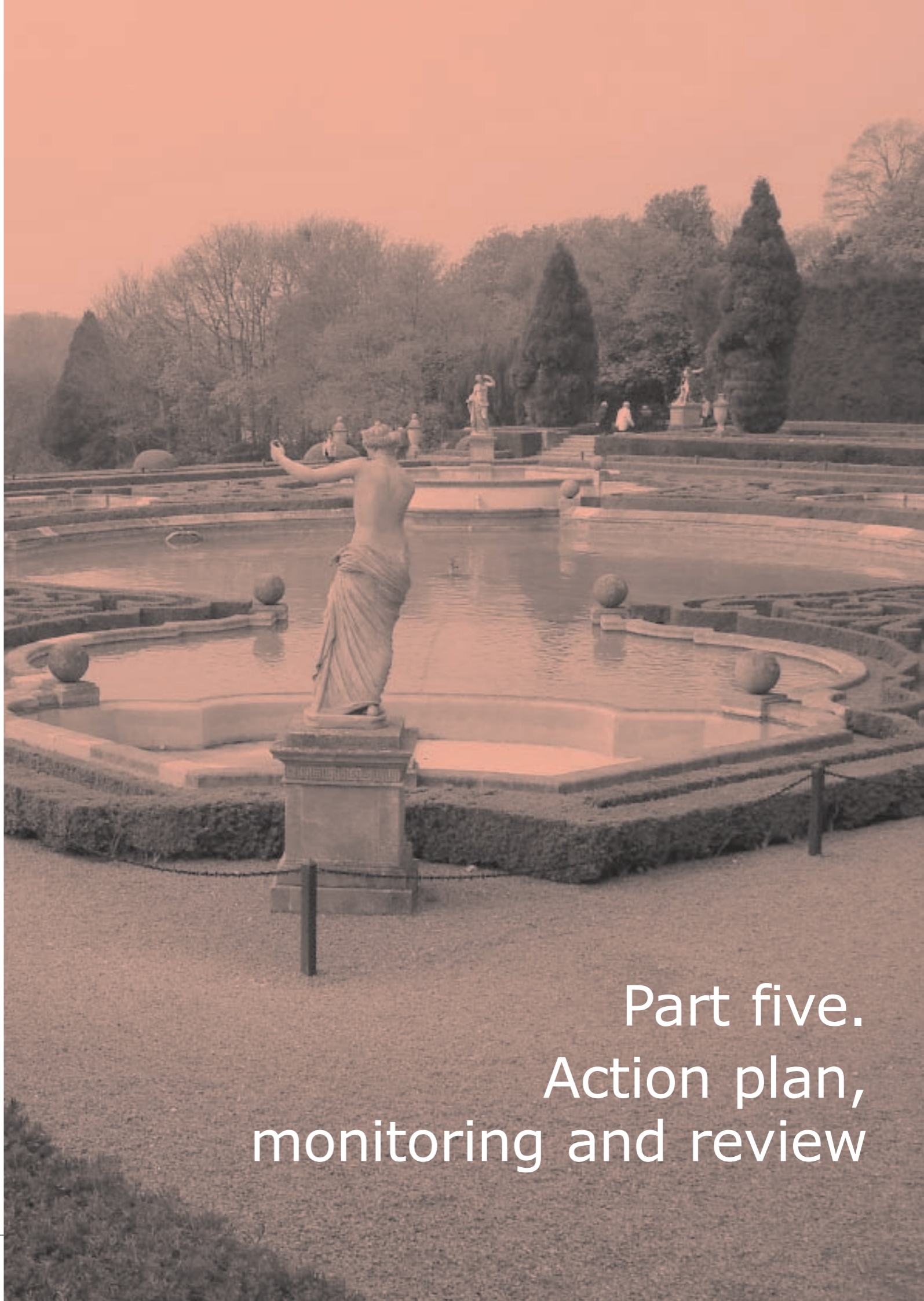
4.9.5

Visitors

Blenheim already undertakes regular visitor surveys and these should be continued as a valuable means of informing appropriate management of the site. Traffic flows and parking have already been highlighted as an issue (Issue 14) and a specific study of visitor flows and traffic would be very beneficial in finding solutions which could enhance many features of the WHS.

Objective 32: Facilitate and encourage appropriate research to improve the scenic, scientific, historic and architectural knowledge and understanding of the site so as to aid implementation of the management plan, and to ensure that the results of such research are disseminated to relevant bodies and individuals.

Objective 33: To complete an up to date catalogue of the archives held at the Palace, and when resources allow, to move the documents to a more suitable location.



Part five.
Action plan,
monitoring and review

Part five. Action plan, monitoring and review

5.1

Implementation strategy

While this plan provides the focus for conservation activities, the implementation of the objectives and actions it proposes will require continued commitment and resources both from the Estate and from the authorities with an interest in the site. The Estate are able to demonstrate their commitment to the conservation of Blenheim through their aspirations to achieve high levels of care and maintenance. To provide continued support and assistance, the Steering Group set up to guide the production of this plan will continue to work with the Estate in the future to help deliver the aims and objectives of the plan.

In order to effectively implement the plan, a programme of practical action has been prepared which translates the aims and objectives into a prioritised annual work programme for the coming five years. The systems for reviewing and updating the plan, and for monitoring the progress of the work programme, are also laid out.

To facilitate the implementation of the management, the Blenheim Estate will nominate a member of staff, with experience of heritage management, to act as their World Heritage Site Co-ordinator.

5.2

Monitoring strategy and its importance

The Blenheim Estate will monitor and record progress by preparing an annual report (on a topic-by-topic basis) of activity within the WHS area to review the implementation of the programmes of work. It will report on what has been achieved and what is planned for the coming year, and it will include a record of public access. It is a requirement of the conditional exemption for the national heritage land to submit such a report each year to HMRC.

Any work not completed in its designated year will be carried forward to the next year and an appropriate programme adjustment made. A note will be made in the report of the reason why the work was not done together with a statement of when it can reasonably be achieved.

Meetings between the Blenheim Estate and the members of the Steering Group and statutory agencies will be held as and when necessary, or if requested by any of the Agencies involved. In October 2006, English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Agency will be merged to form a new body to be known as Natural England. A representative from this new body will be included in the Steering Group in the future.

Variations may be required from time to time, for example if new information comes to light, and these will be communicated to the Steering Group as and when appropriate.

5.3

The term of the plan and its review strategy

The content of this plan will be reviewed every 5 years. All modifications or additions should be checked to ensure they comply with the overarching objectives. The national heritage property will be the subject of a quinquennial site inspection as required by the conditional exemption status.

5.4

Action plan

The objectives identified in section 4 are included in this action plan together with detailed action points designed to help deliver these. It is recognised that the works are mostly funding dependent and therefore suggested timings are regarded as a means of prioritisation as opposed to definitive timing on an action plan. The personnel column is not definitive, but provides a guide as to those who are likely to be involved in the action.

Priorities:

Urgent = within 1 year
 Immediate = 1-2 years
 High = within 5 years
 Medium = within 15 years
 Long-term or Desirable = within 30 years

Personnel:

BE Blenheim Estate
 WODC Officers of West Oxfordshire District Council
 EH English Heritage
 EN English Nature
 CA Countryside Agency
 DCMS Department of Culture, Media and Sport
 FC Forestry Commission
 EA Environment Agency
 HA Highway Authority (including Public Rights of Way)
 ConA Conservation Architects
 HLS Historic landscape specialist

Blenheim Estate and Staff:

CE Chief Executive
 PD Property Director
 FD Finance Director
 EO Education Officer
 PM Park Manager
 GM Game Manager
 HG Head Gardener
 WHC World Heritage Site Co-Ordinator

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
Objective 1 1a: Maintain, repair and preserve Blenheim Palace and maintain and preserve Blenheim Park and grounds and pleasure grounds occupied with Blenheim Palace as required by the undertakings for the conditionally exempt estate. 1b: Maintain, conserve and enhance the OUV of the World Heritage Site.	High	BE and all Key partners
Objective 2 Adopt the management plan as the framework for all plans, policies and decisions relating to the World Heritage Site.		
2.1 Agree the content of the management plan and adopt it formally. Submit the finished plan to the Countryside Agency and HMRC in fulfilment of point (iv) of the 1999 undertakings. Publish the final plan.	Immediate	BE and all key partners
2.2 All departmental managers to adopt the relevant part of the plan and incorporate its content in their own planning documents	Immediate	CE/FD/PD/PM/GM/HG/EO
Objective 3 Ensure that all uses, activities and developments within the WHS/HL are undertaken in a sustainable manner and to the highest possible standards.		
3.1 Provide regular training and refresher programmes for staff and volunteers and encourage traditional craftsmanship	High	CE/ All staff
3.2 Define standards of work. Make all staff and contractors aware of the Heritage qualities of the site and the standards of work required to maintain and conserve those qualities	Immediate	All staff
3.3 All new projects should be tested to ensure they comply with the aims and objectives of this plan. Where proposals are not aimed purely at conservation their impact on the site should be assessed and mitigation measures taken where necessary	Immediate	CE/Trustees
3.4 All future proposals should be based on an understanding of Blenheim's history and significance. They should adopt the principles of informed conservation and be as reversible as possible to protect the character of the WHS/ national heritage property	Immediate	CE/Trustees
3.5 All new works should be sustainable, of the highest standards of design, relate well to their setting and use local materials	Immediate	CE/Trustees
Objective 4 Promote the need for special treatment and a unified approach by central government departments, agencies, local authorities and other statutory bodies with responsibilities for making and implementing policies and undertaking activities that may affect the WHS / HL.		
4.1 Maintain contact with the members of the management plan steering group as implementation progresses, to aid a unified approach. Consider achieving this through regular communication and by holding annual meetings, which may also be a useful means of monitoring compliance with the requirements of conditional exemption.	Immediate	All
Objective 5 5a: Maintain public access to the site as per the undertakings for the conditionally exempt land. 5b: Enhance public access where possible sustainably and ensure awareness of access opportunities, resources, education programmes and Outstanding Universal Value.	Immediate	BE
5.1 See specific objectives 27 to 30 relating to public access management and levels of publicity		
Objective 6 Blenheim Estate should continue to identify and monitor potential risk/threats to the WHS and ensure that appropriate plans and strategies are drawn up and implemented to mitigate for these threats.		
6.1 Regularly review crisis management and emergency procedures	High	All staff
6.2 Monitor effects of climate change particularly in relation to its effects on planting in the historic park and garden and the effect this has on staff resources and costs	High	PM/HG
6.3 Maintain links with national, regional and local tourist organisations and exchange information on 'risk'	Medium	CE
Objective 7 Maintain the park wall as the boundary to the World Heritage Site and as the historic physical boundary to the park.		
7.1 Continue an annual rolling programme of maintenance of the fabric of the park wall, including keeping vegetation away from the bases on both sides.	High	PD
Objective 8 Ensure that Blenheim is adequately protected from development that is incompatible with the unique status and character of the World Heritage Site/ Heritage Landscape.		
8.1 Review existing local plan policies which relate to the protection of significant views and vistas in line with this management plan, as Figure 8	Immediate	WODC / EH
8.2 During future reviews of conservation areas and other designations covering the setting of the WHS ensure that the sensitivity of its setting is taken into account.	Medium	WODC / EH
8.3 Review regional plan policies to ensure policies provide protection for the WHS	High	RDA / EH
Objective 9 Maintain a high quality environment for Blenheim Palace by promoting the highest possible standards of design, materials and execution for repair and renovation, new development and alterations to existing buildings, that may impact on the World Heritage Site. These should respect the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.		
9.1 Ensure that policies within the Local Plan that relate to development within the setting of the WHS reflect the importance of Blenheim.	Immediate	WODC
Objective 10 West Oxfordshire District Council will ensure that appropriate policies to protect the WHS are included in the Local Development Framework, and to encourage adoption of this management plan as a material planning consideration.		
10.1 WODC to review the need for specific policies for the WHS for inclusion in the Local Development Framework.	Immediate	WODC
10.2 Facilitate adoption of this plan as a material planning consideration by WODC, and as part of the Regional Plan by the RDA.	Immediate	BE/WODC/RDA

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
Objective 11 The Estate will seek to engage with the local community through regular and structured dialogue so that they can understand how the local community perceive and value the Estate, whilst offering information on the WHS status and the importance of the site locally.		
11.1 Maintain volunteering opportunities as Palace guides and consider increasing opportunities for the local community to become involved	Medium	BE
11.2 Continue to develop contacts with the local community and participation in local initiatives. Continue to provide information on events programmes well in advance and look into new ways to disseminate this	High	CE/WHC
11.3 Consider setting up a 'Friends of Blenheim' scheme.	Medium	CE
11.4 Continue to remain part of the local business community initiatives such as 'Walk into Woodstock'	Medium	CE/FD
11.5 Consider promoting a range of local products in the Blenheim retail outlets	Medium	CE/FD
11.6 Look at ways to include information on local services in Blenheim advertising literature	High	BE promotions department
11.7 Consider forming a link with the local Wildlife Trust	Medium	PM
Objective 12 12a: To continue to maintain Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the satisfaction of English Heritage, following a policy of minimizing ground disturbance, or tree planting, over sensitive archaeological remains as much as possible. 12b: To improve the management of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the satisfaction of English Heritage and the local authority.		
12.1 Ensure all five SAM's are in a stable condition, carrying out any works identified in the Wessex Archaeology report as being required and liaising with English Heritage.	High	PM/EH
12.2 WA6 Grim's Ditch. Ensure that the surface of the track is maintained in good order to reduce creation of damaging ruts.	High	PM/EH
12.3 WA7 Grim's Ditch. Prevent establishment of scrub and do not replace any fallen trees. Some level of tree cover to remain as this is part of historic Brown boundary plantation.	High	PM/EH
12.4 WA5 Bowl Barrow. Inform all relevant members of staff as to the location of this monument to protect against vehicle damage	High	PM/EH
12.5 WA8 Roman-Celtic temple. Historic tree planting here conflicts with the protection of the monument. Carefully remove trees from this monument.	High	PM/EH
12.6 WA22 Pillow Mounds. Inform all relevant members of staff as to the location of this monument to protect against vehicle damage	High	PM/EH
12.7 Provide map of location of known archaeological sites to site managers to ensure these are not damaged by on-going management of the park	High	WHC to CE/PM/GM/HG
Objective 13 To discuss with the County Archaeologist or a bona fide archaeologist appropriate management of any newly discovered sites and to report all archaeological finds to the County Sites and Monuments Office or Historic Environment Officer.		All staff
Objective 14 To keep the Palace and its associated buildings and structures in a good state of repair by continuation of the present high level of workmanship, through an annual rolling programme of maintenance, supplemented by a five-yearly fabric inspection of the listed buildings.	Immediate	PD/ConA
14.1 Set in place a quinquennial fabric inspection of all listed buildings. If possible this should coincide with the QI requirements of conditional exemption.	High	PD/ConA
14.2 PALACE: detailed in Part 1, Volume 2 of the RMP 2005 Condition Survey. Carry out urgent repairs (Priority 1) as detailed in 3.1.1 – 3.1.15.	High	PD/ConA
14.3 PALACE: Carry out Priority 2 repairs 3.2.1 – 3.2.14. In particular look at recording internal drain pipes; completing a CCTV survey of chimney flues. and ensuring external services and cabling are kept as invisible as possible.	Medium	PD/ConA
14.4 PALACE: Carry out Priority 3 repairs 3.3.1 – 3.3.	Medium	PD/ConA
14.5 PALACE: Carry out Priority 4 repairs 3.4.1 – 3.4.11	Desirable	PD/ConA
14.6 COLUMN OF VICTORY: detailed in p8, Part 1, Volume 3. Repair plinth stonework. Undertake a high level inspection.	High	PD/ConA
14.7 COLUMN OF VICTORY: repair and reset railings. Look at archaeological survey of paving around the plinth.	Medium	PD/ConA
14.8 GRAND BRIDGE: detailed in pp36-40, Part 1, Volume 3. Remove plants from parapet, close off dangerous staircase, invite structural engineer to look at footings and comment on mature beech trees by abutment wall. When replanting, move away from Bridge and address reduced ground levels.	Urgent	PD/PM/ConA/HLS
14.9 GRAND BRIDGE: Prevent water ingress to structure and carry out masonry repairs	High	PD/ConA
14.10 GRAND BRIDGE: extensive repairs to masonry, parapet walls, internal walls and structure	Medium	PD/ConA
14.11 GRAND BRIDGE: complete main programme of repairs.	Long	PD/ConA
14.12 HENSINGTON GATE: detailed in p48, Part 1, Volume 3. Review means to guide vehicles through gate to prevent damage	Urgent	PD/ConA
14.13 HENSINGTON GATE: repair south pier cornice and ironwork bracket on north quadrant. Improve landscape setting.	High	PD/ConA/HLS

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
14.14 HENSINGTON GATE: repair coping stones and corroded ironwork	Medium	PD/ConA
14.15 HENSINGTON GATE: complete masonry repairs	Long	PD/ConA
14.16 HIGH LODGE: detailed in p56. Part 1, Volume 3. Repair roof and rainwater goods, and some redecorating and repointing	Urgent/High	PD/ConA
14.17 HIGH LODGE: some repointing and minor stone replacement	Medium	PD/ConA
14.18 NEW BRIDGE: detailed in pp71-73, Part 1, Volume 3. Remove plant growth from south-east pier	Urgent	PM/PD
14.19 NEW BRIDGE: carry out repair works to external walls and masonry	High	PD/ConA
14.20 NEW BRIDGE: continue comprehensive programme of masonry repairs	Medium	PD/ConA
14.21 NEW BRIDGE: complete repairs to rusticated stonework	Long	PD/ConA
14.22 TEMPLE OF DIANA: detailed in p79, Part 1, Volume 3. Attend to defective roof coverings and reset displaced steps. Address damage caused by adjacent trees	Urgent/High	PD/ConA/HG
14.23 TEMPLE OF DIANA: repair cramp damage	Long	PD/ConA
14.24 TEMPLE OF HEALTH: detailed in p 86, Part 1, Volume 3. Cut back laurels away from building	Urgent	HG
14.25 TEMPLE OF HEALTH: undertake work to remove iron cramps and replaced damaged stones	Medium	PD/ConA
14.26 WATER TERRACES: detailed in pp105-106, Part 1, Volume 3. Remove tree growth from n-w corner of fountain	Urgent	HG
14.27 WATER TERRACES: relay uneven paving, build up ground around manhole covers and redress with single colour of suitable grade gravel.	Urgent	HG/HLS
14.28 WATER TERRACES: employ conservator to attend to statuary repairs	Urgent/High	PD/Conservator
14.29 WATER TERRACES: carry out a programme of repairs to steps, retaining walls and statuary	Medium	PD/ConA
14.30 WATER TERRACES: complete repairs to retaining walls and stone steps	Long	PD/ConA
14.31 WOODSTOCK GATE: detailed in pp 122-124, Part 1, Volume 3. Carry out urgent repairs to rainwater goods, roof coverings and timberwork. Repaint as needed	Immediate	PD/ConA
14.32 WOODSTOCK GATE: attend to decaying timber and redecorate affected windows. Minor masonry repairs. Keep gutters clear of beech mast from adjacent tree	High	PD/ConA/PM
14.33 WOODSTOCK GATE: repairs to external walls and masonry, timber and ironwork. Consider improvement to landscape setting	Medium	PD/ConA/HLS
14.34 WOODSTOCK GATE: complete repairs to external walls and masonry	Long	PD/ConA
14.35 CHINA CORNER: detailed in pp 18-21, Part 2, Volume 1. Urgent repairs to rainwater goods, and roof coverings. Keep ivy growth in check	Urgent	PD/ConA/PM
14.36 CHINA CORNER: repairs to external walls and masonry, parapets, rainwater goods, windows and roof coverings	High	PD/ConA
14.37 CHINA CORNER: repairs to chimneys, walls and external masonry	Medium	PD/ConA
14.38 CHINA CORNER: renew some leadwork, rebuild chimney and repointing	Long	PD/ConA
14.39 COWYARDS AND COWYARDS COTTAGE: detailed in pp81-90, Part 2, Volume 1. Extensive urgent repairs needed to rainwater goods and roof coverings	Urgent	PD/ConA
14.40 COWYARDS: Carry out comprehensive programme of repairs to masonry, roof coverings and windows	Urgent/High	PD/ConA
14.41 COWYARDS: rebuild chimneys, major joinery repairs, further work on masonry and windows	Medium	PD/ConA
14.42 COWYARDS: minor repairs to complete restoration programme	Long	PD/ConA
14.43 DITCHLEY LODGE AND GATE: detailed in pp105-107, Part 2, Volume 1. Urgent work to rainwater goods	Urgent	PD/ConA
14.44 DITCHLEY LODGE: Structural engineer to look at bulge in wall, masonry, ironwork on the gate and joinery repairs	Urgent/High	PD/ConA
14.45 DITCHLEY LODGE: repairs to chimneys, masonry, rainwater goods and roof. Improve general appearance of landscape setting	High-Medium	PD/ConA/PM/HLS
14.46 EAGLE LODGE: detailed in pp113-114, Part 2, Volume 1. Urgent repairs needed to rainwater goods and plasterwork	Urgent	PD/ConA
14.47 EAGLE LODGE: rebuild south boundary walling, rebuilt top of pier and point/monitor open stepped joint	High	PD/ConA
14.48 EAGLE LODGE: rebuild chimney, repoint stone gate piers, make good render	Medium/Long	PD/ConA
14.49 FISHERY COTTAGE: detailed in pp127-128, Part 2, Volume 1. Urgent repairs to roof and rainwater goods	Immediate	PD/ConA
14.50 FISHERY COTTAGE: repairs to chimneybreast stonework, window redecoration. Improve general landscape setting	Urgent/High	PD/ConA/HLS
14.51 FISHERY COTTAGE: minor repairs to masonry and roof coverings	Medium-Long	PD/ConA

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
14.52 THE GROTTTO: detailed in p133, Part 2, Volume 1. Urgent review of health and safety aspects of allowing public in and around grotto.	Urgent	PD
14.53 THE GROTTTO: remove plant growth from wall head and improve landscape setting	Urgent/High	HG/HLS
14.54 HENSINGTON LODGE: detailed in pp143-144, Part 2, Volume 1. Urgent works to rainwater pipes	Urgent	PD
14.55 HENSINGTON LODGE: repairs to chimneys and masonry. Cut back plant growth new buildings	Urgent/High	PD/ConA
14.56 HENSINGTON LODGE: repair railings, parapet and minor work to outhouse	Medium-Long	PD/ConA
14.57 KITCHEN GARDEN: as detailed in pp34-42, Part 2, volume 2. Urgent need to remove plant growth and ivy from walls. Attend to loose and dangerous masonry. Urgent repairs to coping and brickwork. Need for structural engineer to look at leaning wall	Immediate	PD/ConA/HG
14.58 KITCHEN GARDEN: begin major programme of stonework and brickwork repairs. Research design of original gates.	Urgent/High	PD/ConA
14.59 KITCHEN GARDEN: continue restoration programme on walls	Medium	PD/ConA
14.60 KITCHEN GARDEN: complete work on wall repairs. Temporary props for cast iron grilles in glasshouse, and other works.	Long	PD/ConA
14.61 PARK FARM BUILDINGS: detailed in pp101-110, Part 2, Volume 2. Urgent works needed to roofs and rainwater goods	Immediate	PD/ConA
14.62 PARK FARM BUILDINGS: repairs to external masonry, doors, windows roofs and rainwater goods. Consider removal of slate covered sheds to return to Brown design.	High	PD/ConA
14.63 PARK FARM BUILDINGS: major repair programme needed for masonry, also repairs to joinery and windows, and to clock dial and bell	Medium	PD/ConA
14.64 PARK FARM BUILDINGS: complete external masonry repairs and verge tiles on roof. Carry out research into original roof tiles.	Long	PD/ConA
14.65 ROSAMUND'S WELL: detailed in p115, Part 2, Volume 2. Clear moss and plant growth from stone coping, improve overall landscape setting and landscaping of outlet into lake.	High	PD/PM/HG/ HLS
14.66 ROSAMUND'S WELL: comprehensive programme of masonry repairs, possibly partial rebuilding	Medium	PD/ConA
14.67 SWISS BRIDGE: detailed in pp124.125, Part 2, Volume 2. Temporary repairs and redecorate ironwork balustrades. De-rust and redecorate cast iron structure.	High	PD/ConA
14.68 SWISS BRIDGE: take down hand rail and repair. Undertake masonry repairs to abutments. Repair ironwork braces on piers	Medium	PD/ConA
14.69 TEMPLE OF FLORA: detailed in p131, Part 2, Volume 2. Investigate condition of leadwork and patch where necessary	Immediate	PD/ConA
14.70 TEMPLE OF FLORA: renew leadwork	High	PD/ConA
14.71 TEMPLE OF FLORA: carry out minor masonry repairs and make good loose steps	Long	PD/ConA
14.72 WALLS NORTH OF WOODSTOCK GATE: detailed in p136, Part 2, Volume 2. Urgent work to ensure gullies are working. Remove tree growth from west pier and wall-head.	Urgent	PD/HG
14.73 WALLS NORTH OF WOODSTOCK GATE: repair and repoint at lower levels, replacing isolated stones as necessary	Medium	PD
14.74 WALL FROM WOODSTOCK LODGE TO CHINA CORNER: detailed in pp147-149, Part 2, Volume 2. Remove ivy growth and other plants. Repoint small section	Immediate	PD/HG/PM
14.75 WALL FROM WOODSTOCK LODGE TO CHINA CORNER: Replace defective coping and damaged stones. Carry out a plumb survey and monitor	High	PD
14.76 WALL FROM WOODSTOCK LODGE TO CHINA CORNER: more comprehensive repairs, repointing and stone replacements	Medium	PD/ConA
14.77 WALL FROM WOODSTOCK LODGE TO CHINA CORNER: complete patching and repairs	Long	PD/ConA
14.78 WOODSTOCK LODGE: detailed in pp158-159, Part 2, volume 2. Minor repairs to gully and core hole	High	PD
14.79 WOODSTOCK LODGE: clear rubble from base of north elevation, minor repointing	Medium-Long	PD/ConA
14.80 FURZE PLATT: Weatherproof barn and cattle sheds. Consolidate structures	High	PD
14.81 NORTH LODGE: Correct drainage issues and retain weatherproof coverings	High	PD
14.82 SEVEN ARCHES BRIDGE: Repairs and replacement of ashlar. Inspect for movement	High	PD/Structural engineer
14.83 SEVEN ARCHES BRIDGE: Further stonework repairs. Works to drainage	Medium	PD
14.84 ICEHOUSE: consolidate entrance stonework	High	PD
14.85 ICEHOUSE: Internal inspection of chamber	Medium	PD
14.86 ICEHOUSE: removal of some trees on the dome	Desirable	PM
14.87 PAVILION IN BLADON PARK: demolish	High	PD

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
14.88 BLADON LODGE/GATE: repair gate pier and hinge	Immediate	PD
14.89 BLADON LODGE/GATE: repoint house and carry out timber repairs	Medium	PD
14.90 THE LINCE: improve drainage and inspect parapet gutters	Immediate	PD
14.91 THE LINCE: stonework repairs; weatherproof coverings to traditional outbuildings	Medium	PD
14.92 LINCE BRIDGE: reset SW corner. Copy repairs	Medium	PD
14.93 SPRINGLOCK LODGE: repair stucco on chimneys	Medium	PD
14.94 PUMPHOUSE NEAR CASCADE: inspect for movement. Correct drainage	High	PD/Structural engineer
14.95 THE BOATHOUSE: masonry repairs and repointing	Medium	PD
14.96 COMBE LODGE: remove cement base pointing and replace with lime mortar. Carry out minor consolidation of limestone ashlar	Medium	PD
14.97 PARK FARMHOUSE: inspect rainwater goods and drainage. Repair roof to provide weatherproof covering	High	PD
14.98 PARK FARMHOUSE: repointing	Medium	PD
14.99 PARK FARM COTTAGES: roof repairs – replace missing tiles, reset slipped tiles, repoint ridge. Repoint brick walls and replace weathered bricks. Repair windows and redecorate. Carry out repairs and maintenance to chimney stacks including repointing	High	PD
14.100 Nos 1 & 2 BOTHY COTTAGES: improve rainwater goods and drainage	High	PD
14.101 Nos 1 & 2 BOTHY COTTAGES: carry out stone repairs and repointing	Medium	PD
14.102 FORMER GARDENERS HOUSE: repair rainwater goods and drainage. Timber repairs and repointing	High	PD
14.103 PARK WALL: reinstate structural stability near 9/11 Old Woodstock. Repair collapsed sections on west side in High Wood, and between Mapleton Pond and Combe Lodge. Repair coping east of Bladon Lodge. Repair defective sections and coping east of Ditchley Gate.	High	PD
14.104 SUNDIAL NEAR BOTHY COTTAGES: inspect gnomon. Consolidate/repair pedestal	High/Medium	PD/HG
14.105 STATUARY: Four Putti at the Exhedra – further detailed inspection	Urgent	PD/HG/Conservator
14.106 STATUARY: Hermes – assessment and repair of leadwork at base of figure	Urgent	PD/HG/Conservator
14.107 STATUARY: group in centre of Rose Garden – conserve marble figures	High	PD/HG/Conservator
14.108 ITALIAN GARDEN: repair and reset steps and balustrade on east side, in NW corner and in SW corner. Repair/consolidate sundial pedestal	High	PD/HG
Objective 15 To continue to adopt conservation techniques with appropriate materials in the care and management of vernacular and listed buildings, carrying out repairs on a 'like-for-like' basis where possible and appropriate. Specifically, windows and doors should remain of painted timber where this is the original material (changes to UPVC or other modern materials must be avoided), and mortars should be lime-based.		
15.1 When undertaking repairs or new works ensure that historic details and vernacular character are conserved, and that any new uses do not conflict with heritage status of the site.	High	CE/PD/EH
Objective 16 16a: To seek advice from English Heritage and West Oxfordshire District Council on proposals affecting Grade I and II* listed buildings. 16b: To seek advice from the Countryside Agency and West Oxfordshire District Council on proposals affecting Grade II listed, and unlisted, buildings.	High	CE/PD
Objective 17 To commission a measured survey and Conservation Plan for Blenheim Palace and its associated buildings	Medium	PD/ConA
Objective 18 18a: Conserve the character, layout and features of the designed historic parkland landscape, giving top priority to maintaining and sustaining the landscape restoration operations implemented since 1982 while sustaining the key views and vistas, together with the cyclical management regimes on which the conservation and protection of the historic landscape depends. 18b: Where appropriate, enhance or restore the features of the designed historic landscape. To achieve this, recommence works to historic parkland as detailed in Appendix 4 and the 4 volumes of the landscape restoration plan. Instigate an annual programme of maintenance checks on all new plantings to maximise establishment rates. An inspection of this work will form part of the QI required by exemption.	High	PM/HLS
18.1 Investigate opportunities for carrying out parkland restoration work and wildlife enhancements offered by HLS agri-environment scheme	Medium	PM
18.2 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE: Replant individual beech	High	PM/HLS/ConA
18.3 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE: plan modifications to Icehouse Quarry re Queen Pool dredgings	Medium	PM/CE/Engineer/Archaeologist/HLS
18.4 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE: commence management of 9th Duke's clumps	High	PM/HLS

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
18.5 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE – LAKE: protect Brown's Dam as far as possible from the effects of proposed Reservoir Act mitigation measures in relation to 10,000 year event. Resolutions outside the WHS should be sought first. The dam heights and cascades are important as sophisticated examples of water retention techniques in the C18, as well as being aesthetically beautiful	High	CE/PD/EA/HLS
18.6 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE – LAKE: manage marginal vegetation to keep open important historic views and reflections in the water	High	PM/HG/HLS
18.7 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE: commence dredging of Queen Pool in sections and investigate need for similar works to The Lake	Medium	CE/PM/Engineer/Archaeologist/HLS
18.8 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE: manage and convert spruce plantation to b'leaves	Medium	PM, FC/HLS
18.9 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE: Plant 'understudy' cedars	Medium	PM/HLS
18.10 BROWN'S CENTREPIECE: Remove conifers on SW knoll	Medium	PM/HLS
18.11 LOW PARK: Reinforce planting in Low Park and Hensington Avenue. Liase with vehicle parking proposals re opportunities for landscape restoration of avenues	High	PM/CE/HLS/Vehicle flows consultant
18.12 LOW PARK: thin 13th Duke's roundels	High	PM/HLS
18.13 GREAT PARK: Thin Eastern Belt	High	PM/HLS
18.14 GREAT PARK: Reinforce Western Belt	High	PM/HLS
18.15 GREAT PARK: Trial new plantings for Grand Avenue	High	PM/HLS
18.16 GREAT PARK: Underplant Monument Plantation	Medium	PM/HLS/Archaeologist
18.17 GREAT PARK: commence management of 9th Duke's clumps	High	PM/HLS
18.18 GREAT PARK: clean Mapleton Pond	Medium	PM
18.19 GREAT PARK: thin centre of 14 Acre Plantation	High	PM
18.20 HIGH PARK: Fell conifer plantation west of road	High	PM/EN/FC
18.21 VALLEY'S: reinforce Icehouse Clump	High	PM/HLS
18.22 VALLEY'S: work associated with preparing to dredge Queen Pool	High	PM/Engineer
18.23 VALLEY'S: Replace larch in Icehouse Clump	High	PM
18.24 VALLEY'S: modify margins of plantation north of Mud	Medium	PM
18.25 VALLEY'S: Replant Duke's Piece and other plantations west of road	Medium	PM/HLS
18.26 BLADON PARK: reinforce Roughpiece Plantation	Medium	PM
18.27 THE LINCE: restore Little London	Medium	PM/ecologist/HLS
18.28 ARABLE LAND: further the aims of sustainability by adopting environmentally sensitive policies and practices, aiming to conserve wildlife and related environmental qualities. Adopt good management by applying only appropriate levels of pesticides, fungicides and artificial fertiliser.	High	PM
18.29 ARABLE LAND: take full account of landscape, architectural, wildlife, archaeological and access values in the day-to-day management of the land. Specifically consider removing arable from the area between Park Farm and the Palace	High	PM
18.30 ARABLE: ensure sensitive approach to cultivations through minimising plough depth, particularly over archaeological areas, such as Akeman Street.	High	PM
18.31 FIELD BOUNDARIES - FENCES: maintain in a good condition where present.	High	PM
18.32 FIELD BOUNDARIES – WALLS: carry out rolling programme of maintenance to ensure historic walls are not lost	High	PM
18.33 FIELD BOUNDARIES – HEDGES: Keep hedges cut low to minimise impact on historic landscape and do not plant new hedges without historic precedent and reference to historic landscape restoration	High	PM
18.34 FIELD BOUNDARIES – HA-HA: continue programme of care and maintenance of ha-ha dividing park from gardens, on a rolling annual programme of work.	High	PM
Objective 19 Consider reducing the impact of game management practises where they may affect the international significance of both the designed historic landscape and the ancient woodland in High Park.		
19.1 Reshape/soften the edges of the new game plantings in Combe Valley	High	PM/GM/HLS
19.2 Reinforce and replant as necessary the game plantations in New Park	High	PM/GM/HLS
19.3 Take account of scenic qualities of the landscape when locating game cover crops	High	GM
19.4 Manage woodlands to diversify structure, age range and species to benefit both restoration of historic landscape and suitability for game management	High	PM/GM/HLS
19.5 Adopt a sensitive approach to the location of temporary rearing pens in the historic park, keeping central core and main historic views, drives and settings of key historic buildings	High	GM

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
Objective 20 20a: Conserve the structure, character and fabric of the gardens and pleasure grounds (boundary defined on Figure 3). 20b: Where appropriate, restore important historic features whilst continuing the long tradition of adding appropriate high quality contemporary layouts and plantings		
20.1 Carry out research into the historic development of the gardens and pleasure grounds so as to better inform future projects and practices	High	HG
20.2 Continue the next phases of development of the Secret Garden	Desirable	HG
20.3 Research history of The Rockery to the south and south-west of the lake. Consider preparing a restoration plan when funds and priorities permit	Desirable	HG
20.4 Carry out a safety audit of trees in the gardens, taking account of advice given	High	HG/Arborist
Objective 21 21a: Identify and monitor the nature conservation interest across the whole site and develop policies, management regimes and monitoring practices that ensure their continued conservation. 21b: Where appropriate, adjust management practices to be compatible with habitats vital to species of nature conservation interest that are in harmony with the OUV of the Park landscape.		
21.1 Agree scope of Conservation Objectives and Definitions of Favourable Condition for the SSSI area with English Nature	High	PO/EN/HLS
21.2 Set up a monitoring programme to record levels of wildlife value on the site	Desirable	PM/GM/HG/EN/HLS
21.3 Adapt management practices where possible to favour wildlife, as long as this does not conflict with the character of the designed historic landscape	Desirable	PM/GM/HG/HLS
Objective 22 Manage the High Park section of the SSSI in agreement with English Nature. Issues to consider are: (i) a long-term programme to remove conifer blocks; (ii) maintenance of existing open habitats and groundflora; (iii) continue the retention of some fallen deadwood left lying on the ground; (iv) the appropriate continuing encouragement and protection of natural regeneration; and (v) the conservation of veteran oaks through the maintenance of open glades free from potentially competitive plant growth.		
22.1 Maintain a proportion of standing dead wood to a minimum of c4 per ha (over 20cm diameter); and the number of fallen lying trees to a minimum of 3 per hectare. A higher proportion than these minimums would give increased wildlife benefits.	High	PO/EN
22.2 Include in the forestry plan a timetable for removing the conifer blocks in the SSSI, starting with the block on the west side of the drive	High	PM/FC/EN
Objective 23 Manage the open water sections of the SSSI with the aim of maintaining their marginal habitats by clearing marginal vegetation at the north end and allowing it to develop at the south end, where these activities do not conflict with the character and value of the designed historic landscape.		
23.1 Agree with English Nature a balance for allowing some marginal vegetation at the south end of the lake. The character of the designed landscape should not be compromised since this forms part of the outstanding universal value	Medium	HG/PM/EN/HLS
Objective 24 Develop a sustainable financial basis with which to support the conservation activities within the World Heritage Site, thereby ensuring that adequate management resources and restoration, conservation, maintenance and renovation skills are available.		
24.1 Prepare a long-term business development strategy	High	CE/PD/FD/Trustees
Objective 25 Maintain a balance between scenic, scientific, historic and architectural features when preparing budgets to fund conservation activities and prioritise the work in order of most urgent need, without jeopardising the lower priority features/minority interests.		
25.1 Set an annual budget for conservation activities which allows an annual percentage of available Estate funds to be directed at landscape projects not related to buildings conservation	High	CE/Trustees
Objective 26 To investigate opportunities for funding, and where appropriate, implementing projects which help deliver this Management Plan, including enabling development where appropriate and consistent with the Management Plan.		
26.1 Appoint a member of staff (new or existing) to act as World Heritage Site Co-ordinator, part of whose role will be to investigate sources of funding for conservation work within the WHS	High	CE/Trustees
Objective 27 Objective 27: To develop a Tourism Plan working in partnership with local and national stakeholders, and to consider opportunities to link with other World Heritage Sites internationally.		

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY	PERSONNEL
Objective 28 To continue to provide an integrated approach to the management of visitors in the site that delivers both a high quality, sustainable visitor experience and offers potential benefits for the local community without compromising the outstanding universal value of the site. This should address vehicle and visitor (including pedestrian) flows and car parking, as well as considering any issues raised by the local community regarding event days.		
28.1 Carry out a study of visitor use and traffic flows to identify how issues affecting the values of the site can be addressed. In particular an improvement in parking arrangements away from the Palace will be a great benefit. There is potential to link this with some restoration work in the park.	High	BE/HA/Consultants/HLS
28.2 Improve traffic flow into the site on event days to reduce the impact on the local community as far as is possible.	High	BE/HA/Local police
28.3 Improve the quality of visitor facilities, focussing on toilets and food outlets	High	CE/FD/PD
28.4 Consider alternative routes for the lorries associated with the water bottling plant, to move them away from the visitor areas and reduce potential damage to the Woodstock Gate.	High	CE
Objective 29 To maintain and manage all rights of way in accordance with statutory duties and to promote all types of visitor access to the heritage property as widely as possible, at both a local and national level.		
29.1 Implement the specific works identified in the 2005 access audit of the park with the aim of reducing levels of trespass and increasing public confidence in where they can walk.	High	BE/HA
29.2 Carry out regular checks to ensure that all public rights of way are open and clearly way-marked.	High	BE/HA/CA
Objective 30 To maintain and continue to support the educational programmes and facilities provided by the Education Service.		
30.1 Sustain and develop the education programme, ensuring continuation of close links to the national curriculum	High	CE/FD/EO/Trustees
30.2 Consider dividing the roles of Education Officer and Archivist to allow both vital roles to be more fully developed	Medium	CE/FD/EO/Trustees
Objective 31 To enhance the visitor experience, particularly in terms of increasing understanding of and appreciation for the landscape and its structures, through the continued provision of improved orientation, information and interpretation.		
31.1 Review the interpretation strategy based on the statement of significance focussing in particular on the designed historic landscape.	Medium	CE/PM/HG/HLS
31.2 Implement the landscape interpretation strategy to increase visitor's enjoyment and understanding of their visit	Medium	CE/PM/HG/HLS
31.3 Review and improve information for visitors	On-going	BE
Objective 32 Facilitate and encourage appropriate research to improve the scenic, scientific, historic and architectural knowledge and understanding of the site so as to aid implementation of the management plan, and to ensure that the results of such research are disseminated to relevant bodies and individuals.		
32.1 If any change of land management is proposed, consider commissioning a survey of the archaeological and/or ecological interest within the site prior to that change, leading to the production of more accurate maps of sensitive areas	Desirable	BE/EH/WHC / Local history soc.?
32.2 Update the Phase One habitat survey of the park	Desirable	EN
32.3 Identify the wildlife interest across the site as a whole, rather than just the designated areas	Desirable	EN/BE / local wildlife trust?
32.4 Use the Moggridge/Cobham views map and Figure 8 of this plan to aid the sensitive management of the park and implementation of planning policies in the wider setting. Consider adding a map showing specific views from the Palace.	High/Medium	HLC/PM/WODC
32.5 Complete a modern measured survey of the Palace, as and when funds/priority permits or when any works dictate if sooner, to aid conservation activities and to protect the original drawings by Vanburgh which are currently used.	High	PD/FD/ConA
32.6 Complete measured surveys of the other listed buildings within the park as and when necessary.	Medium	PD/FD/ConA
32.7 Record the restoration planting work carried out by the present Duke on a map, with a memoir of his thoughts on the project, to add to the archives	High	His Grace/HLS
32.8 Complete the cataloguing and re-housing of the Estate archive so that academic access to the documents can be more easily facilitated.	Medium	EO
32.9 Consideration should be given to having key historic maps and documents reproduced so that originals can be adequately protected and access to the historic record made easier.	High	CE/EO/External
Objective 33 To complete an up to date catalogue of the archives held at the Palace, and when resources allow, to move the documents to a more suitable location.		
	High/medium	EO/CE



Part six. Maps

Glossary of terms

Glossary of terms used in this management plan, in the context of Heritage Management Plans for conditionally exempt properties.

Aims the broad policies which will underlie the overall management of the property and indicate the intended balance that is to be struck between its various uses and interests.

Compliance the continuing fulfilment of the undertakings.

Conditional exemption (sometimes called heritage relief) – heritage property is exempt from Inheritance Tax provided the owner fulfils certain conditions as follows:

- Maintain outstanding land and preserve its character
- Maintain, repair and preserve outstanding buildings
- Provide and publicise reasonable public access.

Exemption depends on compliance with the undertakings.

Conservation all the processes of looking after a property so as to retain its significance, including the management of change, i.e.

- Managing the land in a manner which conserves its natural and man-made features;
- Managing the buildings and objects such that they are properly maintained and conserved;
- Avoiding changes or development which would adversely affect the scenic, scientific or historic interest of the land or the historic and architectural qualities of the buildings.

Designated heritage property property designated by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs as qualifying for exemption from capital taxes or which is the object of an approved maintenance fund, or both, comprising one or more of the following:

- An area of land of outstanding scenic, historic or scientific interest;
- Buildings of outstanding historic or architectural interest and their amenity land; and
- Chattels which are historically associated with such buildings.

[from Section 31(1) Inheritance Tax Act 1984].

Enhancement 'Enhancing' features (for example gapping up or planting new hedgerows) goes beyond the minimum requirement for heritage purposes and forms a voluntary agreement between the owner and the Countryside Agency in order to improve the outstanding qualities of the Estate.

Estate in this document means the Estate staff, acting on behalf of the Spencer-Churchill family and the Blenheim Board of Trustees.

Maintenance the routine work necessary to keep the fabric of a building, garden, landscape or other artefact in good order.

Objectives state how the aims are to be pursued by defining what is to be achieved by management in both the longer and the short term within each interest use or each part of the property.

Outstanding land or buildings which are considered by HMRC to be of sufficient value in the national context to be considered part of our national heritage and therefore capable of qualifying for conditional exemption.

Preservation all the processes of looking after a property with a view to maintaining an identified state of no change. Conditional exemption of outstanding heritage property does not necessarily require its preservation as a 'museum piece' but rather dynamic protection of its significant features. Just as the property which today counts as 'national heritage' reflects the experience and use of centuries, so it will change and adapt as social, environmental and economic circumstances change.

Reasonable public access used in this document to mean:

- Affording reasonable public access to the outstanding buildings
- Access for walking and riding on existing rights of way, supplemented by new access if thought necessary by HMRC; and
- Publicising the availability of such access.

Repair work to consolidate a building, landscape, garden or other artefact with a view to remedying significant decay or damage caused deliberately or by accident, neglect, normal weathering or wear and tear.

Restoration the alteration of a building, garden, landscape or other artefact which has decayed, been lost or damaged or is thought to have been inappropriately repaired or altered in the past. This should only be undertaken where there is good information and where the restoration itself does not harm features or aspects of significance. The object of restoration is to make the building, garden, landscape or other artefact conform again to its design or appearance at a previous date.

Significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific (i.e. wildlife), social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

Sustainability in relation to Heritage Management Plans – Heritage properties are designated for their outstanding importance for the nation. UK government policy is based on sustainable principles and therefore the management of heritage property should follow such principles. This involves managing change so that the maximum significance is passed on to the next generation conserving the property in a manner which 'negotiates the transition from past to future so as to secure the transfer of maximum significance'. The process of preparing a Heritage Management Plan includes identifying those features which are of significance and providing for their conservation so that their essential character and qualities are not eroded or lost.

Undertakings these are what the owner agrees to do in order to maintain the property (and repair outstanding buildings), preserve its character and provide reasonable public access. They are agreed as detailed steps with HMRC as a condition of the tax exemption and can be viewed on the HMRC website www.hmrc.gov.uk/heritage.

Work Programme/Action Plan programme of recurring and non-recurring items or projects. Recurring items may include annual maintenance tasks relevant to heritage management. Non-recurring items or projects are often assigned to a specific year or work period.