

Conservation Management Plan Executive Summary

Introducing the Estate and its Vital Conservation Need

Castle Howard is one of the most historically rich, high profile Estates in the UK. Located within North Yorkshire, the Estate comprises a substantial proportion of the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The world-famous house and gardens are an enormously popular heritage attraction welcoming over 200,000 visitors each year, and the Estate also supports a significant rural business in the region. The Grade I listed mansion house is instantly recognisable thanks to its iconic dome, designed by Sir John Vanbrugh, and the majestic view across the Great Lake to the North façade is synonymous with Evelyn Waugh's classic novel, *Brideshead Revisited*.

The Estate comprises an outstanding combination of 200 listed buildings and scheduled monuments, a designed landscape which is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden comprising tree-lined avenues, extensive and varied gardens, pleasure grounds and parkland, all set in 10,000 acres of sublime and productive estate.

Several nationally important collections are contained within the Estate: horticultural, buildings, statuary and follies, as well as the many artworks and cultural treasures displayed within the house. There is an exceptional archive of historic maps and estate papers relating to the development of the designed landscape and the English Landscape Movement, as well as a rare archive of botanical surveys.

The monumental scale of the Estate's heritage is drawn together by the ownership and management of the Howard family who have provided four centuries of dedicated leadership and vision which has ensured continuity and vitality of the business operation.

The Estate team works extremely hard to address the extensive conservation needs of the Estate in its entirety. Over the last five decades more than £9 million has been invested in conservation and essential repairs to the Estate's heritage assets, in addition to regular spending on maintenance and management. However, there remains a pressing need for major capital expenditure especially on the structures and monuments, as well as on the ancient trees and woodlands that give the Estate its character.

The sheer scale of the conservation challenge is evident when considering Ryedale District's Register of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and Register of Monuments. Nearly 20% of Grade I and II* listed buildings in the district are contained within the Castle Howard Estate. It is estimated that at least £24 million is required to conserve the Estate's listed buildings alone, with five of those listed structures requiring extremely urgent repair works if they are not to be lost to the nation forever. Within just 25 years the cost of the same essential conservation works will rise to at least £49 million and within 50 years such works will cost in excess of £100 million.



In addition a conservative estimate of approaching £20 million¹ will be required to ensure sustainable futures for just five key assets: the Estate Yard complex at Coneysthorpe, the South East wing of the mansion house, the Pyramid Gatehouse, the farm complex at Low Gaterley and Slingsby Castle. Such projects must look to deliver viable options for these listed structures; with the exception of Slingsby Castle these key assets are best conserved by giving them an important economic function that reflects the Estate's contemporary and future requirements.

Revenue and Investment Needs

At present it costs around £7 million per annum to run the Estate, a sum that continues to increase year on year. The income that the Estate is able to raise from its various trading operations is becoming insufficient to meet these day-to-day management and operational costs. Nor is sufficient surplus generated to build up reserves to cover costs associated with essential landscape and building conservation activities. These costs are rapidly rising due to a number of factors including an increasing understanding of the sheer scale of the conservation works required across the Estate, the complexity and time consuming nature of the conservation process, the current scarcity and expense of specialist skills, the cost of appropriate high quality materials, interest rates and inflation.

Furthermore, many of the listed buildings and monuments were designed and built during the eighteenth century, and as a consequence they are all suffering conservation crises concurrently. Similarly, many of the designed landscape features such as the distinctive formal avenues and parkland trees are of a similar age and whilst mature and visually dominant now, they will eventually need replacement.

There will be further challenges to be faced in relation to the designed landscape in terms of future climate change. It is not possible to cost the ongoing management and restoration of landscape features within the estate but it is likely to be significant and should be considered as part of the conservation deficit equation.

Raising capital without selling property in order to meet the costs of the conservation deficit is becoming increasingly difficult at a time of reducing conservation grants. The Estate is exploring how it can increase its own contribution by improving revenue generation, and adding value to currently under performing assets.

¹ At 2008 costs



The Estate as a Driver for Prosperity

The Estate is recognised as a key local and regional driver for economic prosperity in terms of employment² and tourism. Castle Howard is a key visitor destination for the region, providing leisure and recreation opportunities with its network of footpaths and bridleways, the provision of access and interpretation for the gardens, house, stable courtyard and Arboretum along with associated facilities such as a large play area, retail outlets and catering facilities, exhibitions and car parking. Castle Howard provides the major car parking provision (including coach parking) in the Howardian Hills, enabling extensive public access to the Estate and to the wider footpath network.

The Estate offers a diverse range of events and activities throughout the year, appealing to all ages and interests. These include classical and popular music concerts, food festivals, sporting and country interest events, car rallies and so on. Guided walks, house tours, talks, seasonal activities, costumed characters and a changing exhibition programme offer visitors many lively and enriching interpretative experiences.

Using Conservation to Provide a Sustainable Future

The Conservation Management Plan prepared during 2008 provides an analysis of the Estate's special qualities. It draws on the need to conserve those attributes and to ensure they can be used to benefit the Estate and wider region by creating a sustainable asset base. The Plan therefore builds upon the Estate's national significance and standing to present a series of development recommendations that are derived from the following approach:

- An understanding of the Estate's economic significance in terms of the Castle Howard brand, business and tourism offer and contribution to the local economy as both employer and business
- A thorough understanding of the special qualities and sensitivities of the Estate identified in the CMP
- A 'whole Estate' understanding
- An assessment of development opportunities within the Estate
- An understanding of the current management of the assets whether in the 'Core Estate' (Registered Historic Park and Garden) or the 'Wider Estate' of farmland (often tenanted and woodland)

The CMP proposes a number of initiatives which aim to re-invigorate, conserve and enhance the Estate through the generation of revenue and the management of its core assets.

² The Estate employs some 250 people comprising full time, part time and seasonal staff

Each of the projects is intended to be a potential capital or revenue generator for the Estate and all are intended to maintain the integrity of the complete historic Estate as a living, sustainable entity. All will deliver local economic benefits and some have the potential to be major drivers helping to support a step change in the economic well-being of Ryedale and the Yorkshire region.

There are a number of landscape based conservation projects on the Castle Howard Estate that require investment but which are unlikely, in themselves, to be capital or revenue generators. Nonetheless, these projects are of considerable importance because much of the value and significance of the Estate is derived from its designed landscape and natural beauty.

These projects therefore help to ensure the longevity of iconic landscape features and elements of the Estate but will also conserve and enhance the nature conservation value, natural beauty and diversity of the Estate as a whole, providing opportunities for public engagement and enjoyment and thus adding value to the overall visitor experience.

The Need for a Partnership Approach

Delivering the recommendations contained within the Conservation Management Plan will require the Estate to work with its local and regional partners in a collaborative, holistic approach to management and future development, that treats the Estate as a complete historic entity worthy of major investment in order to secure it for the nation. The process of preparing this Plan has demonstrated to all stakeholders the benefits that can arise through close partnership working and the relevant parties are all committed to seeing the successful implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

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