

FURZE PLATT, BLENHEIM ESTATE, WOODSTOCK
Proposed Estate/Family House – Summary – January 2023

PROPOSED NEW HOUSE AT FURZE PLATT, BLENHEIM ESTATE, WOODSTOCK.



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“The proposed house will become the comfortable and elegant centrepiece of an enclosed and inhabited grove within the wider story of Blenheim – another chapter in the unfolding Marlborough/Spencer-Churchill story and is designed as the permanent and future residence of the Marquis and Marchioness of Blandford, their family and successors.”

- Jeremy Musson

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Summary has been prepared on behalf of The Blenheim Estate in relation to the proposed new house at Furze Platt which sits within the World Heritage Site of Blenheim North Park. Accompanying this summary are some of the application drawings, plus a list of the overall submission documents to West Oxfordshire District Council and Historic England.

1.2 The proposed Furze Platt house (partly as a replacement for the existing dwelling) would bring to life this area of the park by restoring the site and allowing the next and future Dukes and their families to live within the famous parkland. The proposed house would serve as a true home at the heart of the Blenheim Estate, given that the Palace itself is not suited to modern family living.

1.3 An update house proposal and surrounding landscape design has been meticulously crafted over the last 18 months, including repeat consultation with Historic England (HE) and West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). Rejuvenating The Furze Platt site also means making vital repairs to some former farmyard buildings which are heritage assets worthy of a new life and purpose.

1.4 Craftsmanship is a key part of the proposal and will deliver a house appropriate to the World Heritage Site and Parkland Setting. In his comment on the evolved proposals, the Country House Specialist, Jeremy Musson, has confirmed his expert review:

“I believe the house meets the standard of excellence one would expect for a new house in this highly designated setting, within the Grade-I registered landscape and the World Heritage status site. It is a crisp, elegant Modern Classical house with great sensitivity to the wider historic context.”

1.5 **Local Plan Policy H2 – Delivery of New Homes:** Policy H2 cross-references to the general principles set out in Policy OS2 and the circumstances under which new dwellings will be allowed in small villages, hamlets and open countryside. These circumstances include allowance for:

- Residential development of exceptional quality or innovative design;
- Replacement dwellings on a one for one basis;
- Where residential development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of a heritage asset.

1.6 From pre-submission discussions with both Historic England and West Oxfordshire Council the approach for a replacement/new dwelling at Furze Platt was agreed to be something of a “hybrid” that relates to each of the above noted policy allowances. In addition, within the World Heritage Site context, the proposal to provide a home within the Park for future Dukes and their families will continue the tradition of residential properties within the Park and reinstating the historical residential presence of the original Furze Platt farmstead.

2. The Blenheim Context and World Heritage Site

2.1 Proposals for Furze Platt have been progressed within the context of the Blenheim Parkland Management Plan (2014) and the World Heritage Site Revised Management Plan from 2017. West Oxfordshire District Council and Historic England have been involved throughout the careful development of the design for Furze Platt and have been supportive of the aspiration to establish a connection between the Duke, his family and the Park, of which they are the proud custodians.

3. Energy and Sustainability

3.1 Through a detailed whole-life cycle carbon assessment and accompanying Energy Optimisation Report, Ridge and Partners LLP have confirmed the Furze Platt proposals would achieve WODC’s space heating target KPI; in addition, proposals will be fossil fuel free. 100% of the energy demand for the new estate house will be met by on-site generation.

4. Landscape Design

4.1 Landscape proposals follow the guidance of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS) Revised Management Plan (HLM, 2017). The landscape design will conserve the historical significance of Furze Platt within the open parkland setting of North Park. Distinctive characteristics of the local landscape will be retained and enhanced; this covers the landscape and character pattern of this part of the North Park at Blenheim, including the archaeology, the open pasture with clumps of trees, the Grand Avenue, the woodland plantation around the park perimeter, the gently rolling topography, views, rubble stone walls, hedgerows, the historic buildings, vernacular materials and habitats.

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4.2 Within the boundary of the former farmstead the landscape pattern will change to become a garden. However, once the house and garden setting have been completed, and the replacement trees have become established, the degree of change to the existing landscape pattern would be increasingly lower. The proposal includes the careful management of the historic park setting, with judicious new planting of trees, which retains and enhances the open character of the Park; this will also be beneficial to the character of the World Heritage Site.

Visual Assessment

4.3 The extent to which the new house is seen from the southern end of the North Park has been carefully managed to ensure that it does not detract in any way from the experience of the parkland, as the setting for Blenheim Palace, nor for views from the Grand Avenue.

Culture and Heritage

4.4 The designation of the Grade I Parkland is integral to the WHS designation and its Outstanding Universal Value. The landscape proposals will therefore complement the existing parkland setting and contribute to the ongoing value of the WHS, as the home of the family who are its guardians. The original design intention, as well as the physical landscape pattern, is important to retain and this will be achieved through:

- concentrating new planting close to the farmstead
- retaining the historic enclosure
- careful choice of tree and hedge species
- sensitive surface treatments for the access drive which is a continuation of an existing trackway.

5. Proposed Estate Dwelling

5.1 The main new dwelling has been progressed as an expression of the Park Lodge tradition. It is proposed in a Modern Classical style with some presence within a historic farmstead - a new estate dwelling within the next chapter of the Blenheim story.

5.2 The house drive will connect through the retained and converted farm buildings on the western side to the house front entrance courtyard. The stepped, tripartite design of the house, with a central five-bay element with lower wings, clearly echoes the overall form of the nearby historic North Lodge – and to some extent High Lodge – two of the several historic residences within the park and estate.

5.3 The ashlar-faced five-bay centrepiece has a more vertical character and echoes early 18th century style in its sash windows; the whole is an opportunity to express the stone craftsmanship which is so important to the Cotswolds tradition. The east and west ‘wings’ are one storey with attics.

5.4 The restrained and understated, but elegant Modern Classical house is the centrepiece of this proposed design and responds well to the long and interesting Classical tradition which unites the historic Blenheim Park and Woodstock story. With its studied simplicity, the subtle variety of its elevations rightly avoids too much reference to or competition with the Baroque.

6. Benefits of Furze Platt Proposals

6.1 The landscape proposals will improve ecology and habitats. Sustainability has also been a major priority of design and the team has worked hard to produce the most efficient ways to make the house sustainable and carbon neutral – considered vital in relation to climate change.

6.2 The Furze Platt proposal will enhance this area of the Blenheim North Park—being sensitive to the local area defining characteristics, as well as to the Estate’s history. Beneficial to the World Heritage Site (WHS) context, overall proposals:

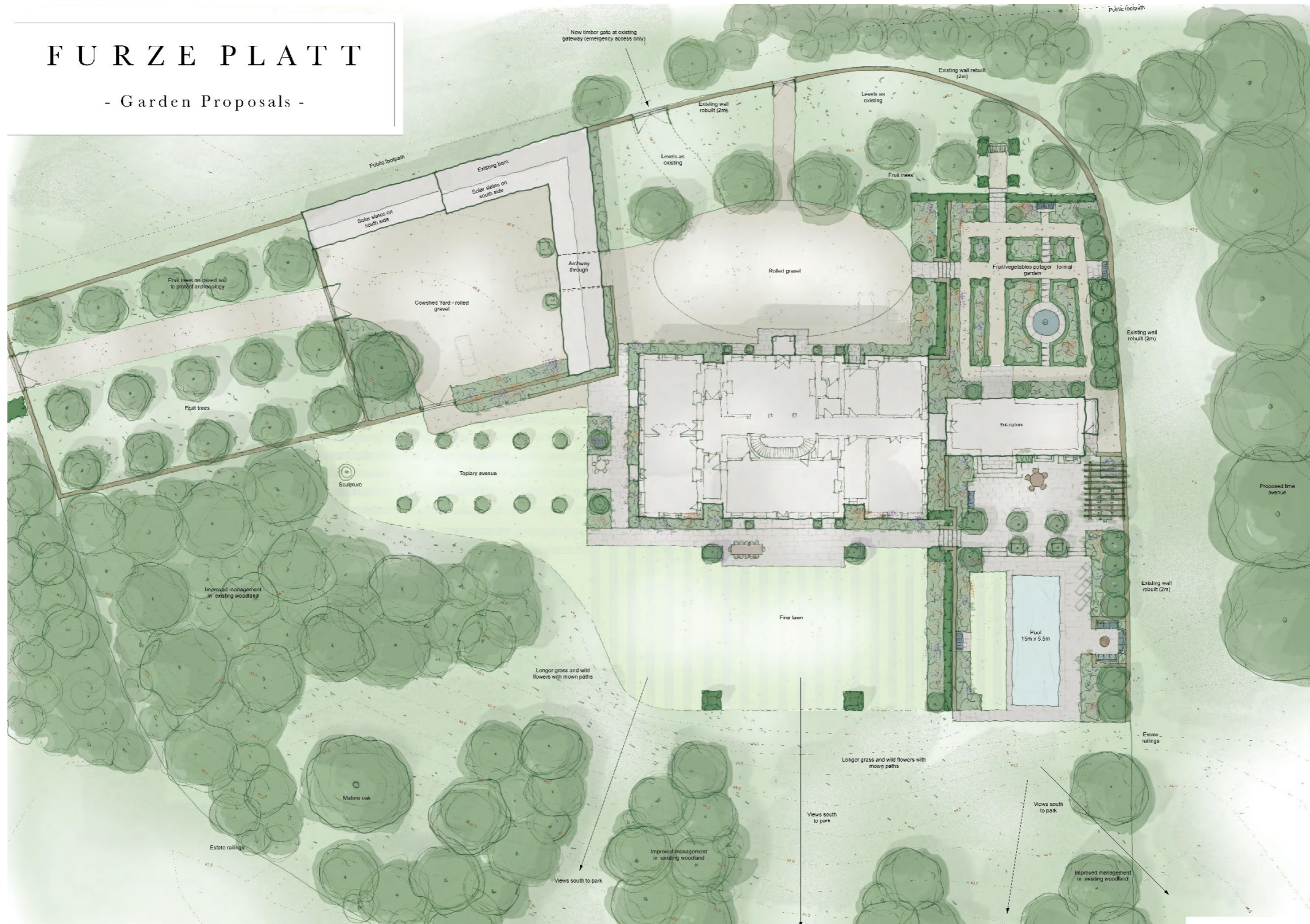
- Will protect and preserve existing heritage assets
- Ensure a design that is subservient, but definitely complementary to the World Heritage Site setting
- Create a place to continue the evolution of the social heritage of the WHS, creating a dwelling fit for modern living and to bring back to the WHS the opportunity for future Dukes, the custodians for their lifetimes of the WHS, to be able to live within Blenheim Park.

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FURZE PLATT

- Garden Proposals -



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Furze Platt Accompanying Design and Access/Heritage Statement Documents

ILLUSTRATED TEXT – VOLUME I

1. Introduction, Site Description and Policy Context
2. Blenheim Park Setting, Heritage/ Landscape Context and Site Description
3. Design References and Architectural Inspiration
4. Design Statement and Architectural Review
5. Energy and sustainability
6. Landscape and Garden Design
7. Access, Rights of Way and Services
8. Heritage Considerations and Impact Assessment
9. Arboricultural/Ecology/Protected Species Survey
10. Historic Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
11. Summary and Conclusions

APPENDICES – VOLUME III

APPENDIX 1	Historic England Emails: 14 th April, 2 nd August, 20 th October 2021
APPENDIX 2	Pre-Application Consultation Document for Historic England Advisory Committee Visit to Furze Platt: June 2021
APPENDIX 3	Furze Platt Design Review: Jeremy Musson
APPENDIX 4	Whole Life-Cycle Carbon Assessment: Ridge & Partners
APPENDIX 5	Energy Optimisation Report: Ridge & Partners
APPENDIX 6	Heritage Statement – Outline Assessment of Significance: Nick Cox Architects
APPENDIX 7	Landscape and Visual Appraisal for Furze Platt Development Proposal: Historic Landscape Management Ltd
APPENDIX 8	Furze Platt Archaeological Evaluation Report: Oxford Archaeology
APPENDIX 9	Furze Platt Ground Penetrating Radar Survey Report: Wessex Archaeology
APPENDIX 10A	Ecology Survey Report: Windrush Ecology
APPENDIX 10B	Woodland Condition and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment: Windrush Ecology
APPENDIX 11	Flood and Drainage Report: Forge Engineering Design Solutions
APPENDIX 12	Design Statement: Francis Terry
APPENDIX 13	Policy Context: Martin Leay

DRAWINGS – VOLUME II

ASKEW NELSON – LANDSCAPE DRAWINGS

AN.1253.101.P	Wider Landscape
AN.1263.104.P	Site Context
AN.1263.106.P	Landscape Sections
-	Furze Platt Garden Proposals





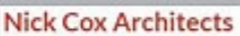


FRANCIS TERRY & ASSOCIATES – ARCHITECTS DRAWINGS

PL01	Ground Floor Plan
PL02	First Floor Plan
PL03	Attic Floor Plan
PL04	Roof Plan
PL05	Barn Floor Plan and Roof Plan
PL06	Elevations and Section
PL07	Watercolour North Elevation
PL08	Watercolour South Elevation (with and without text annotation)
PL09	Watercolour East Elevation
PL10	Watercolour West Elevation
PL11	Watercolour Perspective
PL12	Courtyard Plans and Elevations

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Project Team

	PROPERTY DIRECTOR BLENHEIM ESTATE - Roger File
	ARCHITECTURE FRANCIS TERRY AND ASSOCIATES - Francis Terry
	LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN DESIGN ASKEW NELSON - Max Askew
	BLENHEIM PARKLAND/HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SPECIALIST/LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT HISTORIC LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT LTD - Dr Elise Percifull
	COUNTRY HOUSE SPECIALIST AND ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW - Jeremy Musson
	ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY RIDGE – Mark Richards
	THORP DESIGN - Philippa Thorp
	ARCHITECTS - Nick Cox
	ECOLOGY SURVEY WINDRUSH ECOLOGY LTD - Edward Bodsworth
	DRAINAGE CONSULTANTS FORGE ENGINEERING DESIGN SOLUTIONS
	COORDINATION OF PRE-APP CONSULTATION AND PLANNING/HERITAGE SUBMISSION MARTIN LEAY ASSOCIATES - Martin Leay