

DRAFT STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE – STUDLEY ROYAL PARK INCLUDING THE RUINS OF FOUNTAINS ABBEY

Date of inscription: 1986

Criteria: (i) and (iv)

Date of SOUV: 2010

BRIEF SYNTHESIS

Situated in North Yorkshire, the 18th century designed landscape of Studley Royal water garden and pleasure grounds, including the ruins of Fountains Abbey, is one harmonious whole of buildings, gardens and landscapes. This landscape of exceptional merit and beauty represents over 800 years of human ambition, design and achievement.

Studley Royal is one of the few great 18th century gardens to survive substantially in its original form and is one of the most spectacular water gardens in England. The landscape garden is an outstanding example of the development of the 'English' garden style throughout the 18th century, which influenced the rest of Europe. With the integration of the River Skell into the water gardens and the use of 'borrowed' vistas from the surrounding countryside, the design and layout of the gardens is determined by the form of the natural landscape, rather than being imposed upon it. The garden contains canals, ponds, cascades, lawns and hedges, with elegant garden buildings, gateways and statues. The Aislabies' vision survives substantially in its original form, most famously in the spectacular view of the ruins of Fountains Abbey itself. The Abbey is not only a key eye catcher in the garden scheme but is of outstanding importance in its own right, being one of the few Cistercian houses to survive from the 12th century and providing an unrivalled picture of a great religious house in all its parts.

The remainder of the estate is no less significant. At the west end of the estate is the transitional Elizabethan/Jacobean Fountains Hall, partially built from reclaimed abbey stone and with its distinctive façade, it is an outstanding example of its period. Located in the extensive deer park is St Mary's Church, a masterpiece of High Victorian Gothic architecture, designed by William Burges in 1871 and considered to be one of his finest works.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (2008)

Studley Royal Park, including the ruins of Fountains Abbey, combines into one harmonious whole buildings, gardens and landscapes constructed over a

period of 800 years. All, important in their own right, have been integrated into a continuous landscape of exceptional merit and beauty. Its principal components are:

Studley Royal: one of the few great 18th Century 'green gardens' to survive substantially in its original form: arguably the most spectacular water garden in England. The landscape garden is an outstanding example of the development of the 'English' garden style throughout the 18th century, which influenced the rest of Europe. The garden contains canals and ponds, cascades, lawns and hedges, with elegant temples and statues used as eye-catchers. The layout of the gardens is determined by the form of the natural landscape, rather than a design that is imposed upon it. The Aislabies' design survives substantially in its original form.

Fountains Abbey ruins: a key element in the garden scheme, providing the spectacular culmination to the principal vista, but also of outstanding importance in its own right. It is one of the few Cistercian houses surviving from the 12th Century and provides an unrivalled picture of a great religious house in all its parts. Fountains Abbey, founded in 1132, soon became one of the largest and richest Cistercian abbeys in Britain, before being closed by Henry VIII in 1539 during the Dissolution of the Monasteries. It was partially demolished soon after.

Jacobean Fountains Hall: an outstanding example of a building of its period and partially built with stone from the Abbey. It has a distinctive Elizabethan facade and is enhanced by a formal garden with shaped hedges. The interior of the Hall has been adapted for successive uses, including a courthouse.

St. Mary's Church: an outstanding example of High Victorian Gothic architecture by one of its leading exponents, William Burges, in 1871, and considered to be one of his finest works. A building of importance in its own right, it has also been successfully integrated into the landscape of the Park. The church is one of a pair: its twin is Christ the Consoler at Skelton-on-Ure. They were both designed by Burges and built using the same craftsmen.

Criterion (i): Studley Royal Park including the ruins of Fountains Abbey owes its originality and striking beauty to the fact that a humanised landscape was created around the largest medieval ruins in the United Kingdom. The use of these features, combined with the planning of the water garden itself, is a true masterpiece of human creative genius.

Criterion (iv): Combining the remains of the richest abbey in England, the Jacobean Fountains Hall, and Burgess's miniature neo-Gothic masterpiece of St Mary's, with the water gardens and deer park into one harmonious whole, Studley Royal Park including the ruins of Fountains Abbey illustrates the power of medieval monasticism, and the taste and wealth of the European upper classes in the 18th century.

CRITERIA FOR INSCRIPTION

Criterion (i): *represent a unique artistic achievement, a masterpiece of human creative genius*

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Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural ensemble which illustrates a significant stage in history*

Combining the remains of the richest abbey in England, the Jacobean Fountains Hall and Burgess miniature neo-Gothic masterpiece of St Mary's, with the water gardens and deer park into one harmonious whole, Studley Royal Park including the ruins of Fountains Abbey illustrates the power of medieval monasticism, and the taste and wealth of the European upper classes in the eighteenth century.

INTEGRITY (2010)

The Studley Royal Park was at its most extensive under the ownership of William Aislabie in the latter part of the 18th century. It is one of the few great 18th century gardens to survive substantially in its original form. The landscape design has been little altered by subsequent owners, who mainly respected and only modestly enhanced the original designs by their additions. However, many landscape features disappeared and the maintained part of the gardens contracted due to lack of maintenance. A number of decaying buildings and landscape features from the late 18th century were also removed and parts of the estate were sold into different ownerships. Despite the changes to the estate, the attributes which express the Outstanding Universal Value remain intact and are still evident today. The integrity and authenticity of the ruins of Fountains Abbey is high as is that of St Mary's Church and Fountain's Hall.

The World Heritage Site boundary largely follows the area in National Trust ownership rather than the extent of the historic estate. Therefore some important elements of the designed landscape lie outside the World Heritage Site boundary and may be vulnerable to change. The proposed buffer zone, arising out of the Management Plan process, would protect the integrity of the wider historic estate. World Heritage Committee approval is required for any proposed changes to the World Heritage Site boundary and any buffer zone.

AUTHENTICITY (2010)

The property as a whole has high authenticity in terms of form and design, materials, function, location and setting of features of the great 18th century designed landscape. However, in common with many other cultural sites, particularly those that develop in an organic way such as parks and gardens, both the fabric and design of the landscape at Studley Royal have been continually altered, first throughout the period of inception (up to c. 1781) and thereafter by a mixed process of maturity, modification, aging and decline.

Natural growth, impact of climatic events and development can have both positive and negative impacts on the landscape, as can later design interventions and alterations to its physical fabric.

The National Trust manages the site in partnership with English Heritage. Both these organisations place a high priority on retaining the authenticity of the gardens and historic features. However, there have been numerous conservation interventions since inscription which were necessary to ensure the Outstanding Universal Value of the property was maintained. Conservation works in the garden, to the many garden buildings and to the Abbey and other buildings have adhered to good conservation practice and have been thoroughly researched and documented. Fountains Hall, Porter's Lodge and the Cistercian Water Mill have been sensitively reused to enhance visitor enjoyment of the site. The water garden has been affected by climatic events, such as flooding, and pragmatic modifications, such as the use of modern engineering technology, has enabled conservation of the water garden design.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION (2010)

The UK Government protects World Heritage Sites in England in two ways. Firstly individual buildings, monuments, gardens and landscapes are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act and secondly through the UK Spatial Planning system under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

National guidance on protecting the Historic Environment (Planning Policy Statement 5) and World Heritage (Circular 07/09) and accompanying explanatory guidance has been recently published by Government. Policies to protect, promote, conserve and enhance World Heritage Sites, their settings and buffer zones can be found in regional plans and in local authority plans and frameworks. World Heritage status is a key material consideration when planning applications are considered by the Local Authority planning authority. The Harrogate Borough Council Local Development Framework contains policies to protect the Property.

Since 1983, the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal Estate has been owned and managed by the National Trust in partnership with English Heritage. English Heritage is responsible for conservation of the abbey under a guardianship agreement. St Mary's Church is owned by the State and managed by the National Trust under a local management agreement. Whilst currently not within the World Heritage Site boundary later land additions to the National Trust estate hold significant historical features that had become isolated, including the Swanley Grange part of the monastic grange complex and How Hill, a scheduled monument, which also contains one of John Aislabe's earliest 18th century eye catchers.

There are a range of statutory and non-statutory designations on the property. Fifty four buildings and structures on the site have been listed under the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 as buildings of special architectural and historical interest. The abbey and its surrounds is a scheduled monument. The whole site is Grade 1 on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens in England. The majority of the site also lies within the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Detailed protection of the site is also provided by Harrogate Borough Council's Local Development Framework. A proposal arising out of the Management Plan is being progressed to create a buffer zone to protect the setting of the World Heritage Site. Additional non-statutory protection is afforded by the Nidderdale AONB Management Plan, the Environment Agency's Catchment Flood Management Plans and Harrogate Borough Council's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation designation.

Protection of the estate's artefacts and chattels collection is currently provided by various agencies. Other than the Trust, the main repositories are English Heritage and North Yorkshire County Council.

The World Heritage Site Management Plan for Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal has been recently reviewed and updated. A wide audience was involved in developing the Plan. The key priorities set out in the plan include the restoration of the garden and parkland, production of a Conservation Management Plan, protecting the setting of the World Heritage Site through a buffer zone, water management and adapting to climate change, promoting sustainable management, improving environmental performance, engaging people and partnership working.