



# STANMER PARK

BRIGHTON, EAST SUSSEX

## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SURVEY & RESTORATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2003

COLSON STONE  
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#### SUMMARY

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PREPARED ON BEHALF OF  
BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

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HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Stanmer Estate is located on the north east fringe of Brighton approximately 5km from the City centre. It lies within a prominent, rounded, dry chalk valley aligned north-west to south-east on the dip slope of the South Downs. Much of the site is enclosed by chalk ridges running along the eastern and western sides of the valley. The topography of the site is highly characteristic of this part of the Downland landscape.

The study area extends to 485ha comprising buildings and gardens, farmland, assorted former garden nursery land, pasture, woodland and amenity grassland used as public open space. On the valley floor, roughly at the centre of the site lies the small settlement of Stanmer, arranged around a single street of 20 flint and brick built dwellings, together with a complex of farm buildings, a small village store, café and a flint built church. Stanmer House lies to the south of the village, formed in brick with sandstone ashlar facings to the principal facades, built between 1722 and 1727. There is a stable courtyard and complex of walled gardens to north east of the house, parts of which are contemporary with the house.

The site was purchased by the Brighton Corporation (now Brighton & Hove City Council) in 1947. The majority of the land remains in public ownership but there is no one department within the Council with overall control of operations at Stanmer and there is, therefore, no single budget allocated for the management of the park.

The farmland is let out on an Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy. Furthermore, significant areas of the site have been leased from the Council for a number of uses including residential, educational and horticulture. The southern half of the site lies within the administrative area of Brighton and Hove City Council. The northern half lies within the District of Lewes.

This study has been grant aided by DEFRA under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, with match funding from Brighton and Hove City Council and the Sussex Downs Conservation Board. Its purpose is to:

- Assess the condition and value of the historical, wildlife and landscape elements identified in the Park and appraise any restoration work necessary;
- Review the use and management of land within the site and current management practices;
- Present a programme of work to achieve the restoration and management.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

Several national and local planning designations are relevant to the study area, as a whole or in part. These are summarised as follows:

- The whole site lies within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Large parts of the southern half of the site are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)
- The whole of the area within B&HCC control is designated as a proposed Local Nature Reserve (pLNR)
- The majority of the site is included within the South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)
- There are 29 Listed Buildings within the site (one Grade I, one Grade II\* and twenty-seven Grade II)
- Part of the southern half of the site is designated as a Conservation Area
- There are 3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) and 10 Archaeologically Sensitive Areas (ASA) within the site.
- The whole site is included within the English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* (Grade II)

### 3.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

The name of Stanmer derives from the Anglo-Saxon words “*Stan*” meaning “*stone*” and “*mere*” meaning “*pond*” – thus “*Stony Pond*”. There is evidence of human habitation within the Stanmer Park area extending back as far as the Neolithic period. Further archaeological features exist dating from the Bronze Age through to the Medieval Period, many of which survive as visible earthworks throughout the site.

In 765, Aedwulf, King of Sussex granted the Estate of Stanmer to the Canon and Monks of St Michael in South Malling. The boundary of this Estate, accords with the modern-day boundary of Stanmer Parish. The Village formed a part of an ancient manor and has existed as an entity since at least the time of the Domesday Book of 1086.

Stanmer passed through several hands during its early history before being taken over and expanded by the Michelbourne family during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. When Edward Michelborne died in 1700, it was inherited by his sisters Bridget and Sibella. They immediately sold to Peter Gott, the Receiver General for Sussex. Importantly, a deed accompanying this sale indicates that there were no woodlands within the Estate at this time, only areas of “*furze and heath*” within the uncultivated lands.

Gott lived in the manor house until his death in 1712 when the estate passed to his son Samuel, who immediately sold it to Henry Pelham of Lewes. Pelham died in 1721 and the estate passed to his eldest son, also named Henry, who immediately embarked upon a significant programme of development. By 4<sup>th</sup> August 1721 he had appointed the French architect Nicolas Dubois to prepare designs for a new house and by the middle of the following year work began to demolish the existing manor and to dig foundations for the new Stanmer House. However, in 1725 Henry Pelham died with construction works only partly completed. Having no son, the Estate was inherited by Henry’s brother Thomas “Turk” Pelham and building works resumed under his control and continued for a further 2 years.

In addition to the House and ancillary buildings, Dubois also seems to have been responsible for the design of the gardens in the immediate vicinity of the House. Parts of this layout can be established from an analysis of a remarkable set of building accounts, and from numerous items of correspondence. These make reference to various elements of a formal garden including at least three separate water bodies (a pond, a bason and a canal) and a large amount of earth working to “*remove a great bank of chalk*” and form a “*Terrass Walk*”, complete with stone pedestals, statuary and stone steps, and a levelled “*Bowling Green*”. As works to the House were nearing completion, the accounts show entries relating to the formation of walls around a kitchen garden.

Numerous illustrations dating from the later 18<sup>th</sup> Century show the House to be nestled at the foot of a slope clothed in mature woodland (Great Wood). As the earlier deed of sale reveals that there were no significant woodlands on the estate in 1700, it seems likely that this feature was planted by Henry (father or son) or Thomas Pelham. Later maps and documents also suggest that the early to mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century parkland was relatively modest in extent, showing it to be largely open in character within the valley floor to the south east of the House. This was punctuated by a scattering of parkland trees and six distinct roundels on the west facing valley slopes opposite the House.

Thomas “Turk” Pelham remained at Stanmer until his death in 1737, when the estate passed to his 9 year old son, also Thomas. Upon reaching the age of majority in 1748, Thomas Pelham began an extensive programme of enhancement and expansion of the gardens and parklands – a process which continued throughout the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A survey by Yeakell and Gardener carried out between 1778 and 1783 provides the first graphical representation of the estate that we have found. It indicates a notable departure from the more formalised landscape that probably existed during the 1720’s. There is some evidence to suggest that this was being carried out under the influence of the designer Nathaniel Richmond.

Thomas Pelham was created 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Chichester in 1801. He died in 1805 and was succeeded by his son, also Thomas (2<sup>nd</sup> Earl). A survey carried out between 1799 and 1800 by William Figg of Lewes provides a truly remarkable record of the estate's layout towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earls reign. As well as showing the site in extraordinary detail for the first time, the plan demonstrates that the process of improvement had continued throughout the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, showing significant changes from the Yeakell and Gardener Plan completed only 17 years beforehand.

The Figg plan shows a broadly informal landscape throughout most of the site. The parkland area was encircled by perimeter tree belts of varying widths, many of which contained carriage drives. The belts along the northern, southern and western boundaries have a relatively sinuous outline, whilst those dividing the parkland from arable land and open down land to the east are more rectilinear in their outline, and generally of a consistent narrow width. The north western boundary which forms a division between the arable land of Stanmer and that of "*Pittingworth*" is formed by a narrow belt of trees which largely follows the parish boundary.

The eastern and northern slopes of the valley to the north of the village comprised open grazed pasture land. The valley to the north of Great Wood comprised traditional enclosed fields and small grazed paddocks. However, the core of the designed landscape, encircled by the perimeter belts and drives, as well as the land to the west of Great Wood, remained as productive arable land. This demonstrates the importance of farmland to the Estate as a whole and followed the principal of the *ferme ornée*, a design concept that was developed widely during the middle and late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Generally, within this concept, farm buildings became more ornamented features in the landscape and ornamental planting was incorporated within the shelterbelts and hedgerows. We do not know how far the concept was explored at Stanmer, but there are elements within the design which suggest some degree of influence.

Figg also shows that whilst the woodland belts appear informal in outline, there is evidence of formality remaining within. A number of straight rides exist through Great Wood, extending into the area now known as Pudding Bag Wood. The most prominent of these followed the crest of the slope through the centre of the wood, terminating with a seat at its western end.

In the southern half of Great Wood a series of elaborately curvilinear paths are shown leading up and across the sloping ground. This area has the character of a "*Wilderness*" and it could have been a surviving element of the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> Century landscape design or a part of the later improvements. This treatment would have sat equally well within either period.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Chichester was succeeded by his son Henry Thomas Pelham (3<sup>rd</sup> Earl) in 1826, who was in turn succeeded by his son Walter John Pelham (4<sup>th</sup> Earl) in 1886, who lived at Stanmer until his death in 1892. Despite seeing three generations of Pelhams, a comparison of the Figg survey with early edition Ordnance Survey Maps (1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1873 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1899) shows that the broad arrangement of the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century landscape survived the 19<sup>th</sup> Century largely unaltered. Indeed this continuity persisted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with little major alteration taking place until the Second World War.

The estate was requisitioned by the War Office in 1942. A great deal of damage was caused by the army's occupation, particularly to the buildings around the House and within the Village. There was also significant damage to the woodland areas which were used extensively for training and as practice ranges for tanks firing live ammunition. Furthermore, parts of the Parkland were dug up and replaced by areas of concrete to provide hard standing for the heavy army vehicles and tanks.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Earl was killed whilst on active service in 1944 and Stanmer was put up for sale to cover the substantial death duties. In 1947 the 4,958 acre Estate was bought by the Brighton Corporation for the sum of £225,000. The farmland was immediately leased to a tenant farmer who took up residence in the Farm House at the southern end of the Village. Stanmer House was partially repaired during the late 1940's and early 1950's, but in 1961 the north and west wings were found to be beyond further economic repair and were demolished.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1953, 205 acres of the site were opened up to the public for use as “*Public Walks and Pleasure Grounds*”. A further 36 acres were given over to the Council’s Parks and Recreation Department which established a nursery for the propagation of all of the plants required throughout the Borough. During the 1950’s and 1960’s an extensive programme of woodland management work was begun and certain amount of new planting work was carried out in the gardens to the south and west of the House. There was also an amount of new tree planting carried out within the Parkland as a whole, a process which has continued to the present day.

In the mid 1960’s the University of Sussex was granted a 999 year lease for the development of a new campus on land in the south eastern corner of the site. This site has expanded to occupy approximately 20 hectares of the formerly open parkland and 30 hectares of the formerly enclosed farmland which had adjoined the Park. A further lease was granted to Brighton University on former farmland near Coldean, to the west of Great Wood.

Large areas of the woodlands were lost in the Great Storm in 1987. In the following year, despite fierce local opposition, the A27 trunk road was constructed in a deep cutting through the south western corner of the site physically dividing off the woodland and farmland at Coldean from the remainder of the Estate.

The Council’s plant nursery closed down in 1991. Large parts of this area have since been leased to a variety of community based enterprises, most of which have a basis in alternative forms of therapy or horticulture. There are now an assortment of land uses occupying different parts of this land, each with a varied range of sheds and polytunnels. Furthermore, several buildings have been constructed in the area immediately to the north of the Walled Garden providing offices and storage for a range of users as well as facilities for the Brighton City College.

Stanmer House and the associated stables buildings have remained unoccupied for many years. However, a private developer has recently been granted planning permission for the recreation of the north and east wings and the conversion of the House into residential apartments.

#### **4.0 THE SURVIVING HISTORIC LANDSCAPE**

The designed landscape has evolved in four distinct phases between 1700 and 1812. These correspond to the periods of ownership of:

- Peter Gott (1700 to 1713)
- Henry Pelham Snr., Henry Pelham and Thomas “Turk” Pelham (1713 to 1734)
- Thomas Pelham, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Chichester (1748 to 1805)
- Thomas Pelham, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Chichester (1805 to 1826).

Elements from all of these periods are apparent on the ground. There is also a substantial amount of field archaeology surviving from the period predating the designed landscape. We have prepared a series of analytical plans showing the features of the landscape that exist today and demonstrating the phase of historic landscape development from which each derives. This analysis is divided into Earthworks; Roads, Drives & Paths; Built Features and Trees & Woodlands.

The analysis of the historic layout clearly demonstrates that by far the greatest extent of the designed landscape that exists today has its origins within the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. This was dictated by a framework of pre-existing landform, road network and settlement patterns. The layout was modified to a very limited extent during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### **5.0 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY LANDSCAPE FEATURES**

Within the context of this study the features added during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century are generally not considered as being of historical importance. In fact, to a greater or lesser extent these elements, particularly those added

since 1947, have had a negative impact upon the earlier historic landscape, whether as a result of physical loss, visual intrusion or erosion of its character. The most dramatic changes have come about as a result of built development or the addition of new planting during this period.

### 6.0 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Comparison of modern land uses with those shown on the Figg plan of 1800 demonstrates that whilst the distribution of the woodlands remains largely the consistent, there has been a notable change from arable to grassland in large areas of the site. In addition, the change from grazed pasture to mown grassland in the southern half of the Parkland has had a significant impact upon its character within the setting of the House. Furthermore, there has been a proliferation of built development in three main areas of the site.

A comparison of views around the landscape at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century with those which exist today also demonstrates that the broad characteristics of the landscape have remained consistent – lending weight to our assertion that much of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century landscape has survived. However, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century developments have resulted in negative impacts upon the visual quality of the site. In particular, the southern half of the site has been encircled by elements which are intrusive. Further intrusive development has been allowed within the centre of the study area, close to the Village, the House and the Stables, which impacts upon their setting within wider views.

On the basis of landscape form, land use and visibility we have considered the site within 8 broad character areas. The key issues relating to each area are as follows:

1. *Stanmer House and Village* - Comprising the buildings and gardens in the centre of the site. The designed views from the House have been reduced as a result of 20<sup>th</sup> Century planting and visibility of development within the Walled Garden and Nurseries has adversely affected the setting of the House. Furthermore, the originally open setting of the Stables has been lost as a result of 20<sup>th</sup> Century development in the Nurseries.
2. *Parkland* - Comprising the grassland areas forming the setting to the House and Village. The switch from grazed pasture to mown amenity grassland across much of the area has reduced the parkland character and adversely affects the setting of the House. Furthermore, some of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century planting has reduced views to the House and tree planting in the Parkland will significantly alter its informal character. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century development within and around the southern end of the Park is very intrusive.
3. *Expansive Farmland* - Comprising open agricultural fields with small plantations in the valleys to the north and north west of the Village. The recent change from arable to permanent pasture is beneficial to ecology and archaeology but the cessation of arable cultivation will affect the character of the historic landscape, diminishing the concept of the *ferme ornee*.
4. *Enclosed Farmland* - Comprising smaller hedged fields and narrow plantation belts on the east side of the chalk ridge. The recent change from arable to permanent pasture is beneficial to ecology, archaeology and the historic landscape. However, visibility of 20<sup>th</sup> Century development, in particular the University of Sussex, is intrusive.
5. *Patchway and Nurseries* - Comprising an enclosed valley extending westwards from the village containing the former Nursery site. The coniferous shelterbelts within the Nurseries are out of character with remaining planting on the site and the overall appearance is cluttered and un-coordinated. Furthermore, buildings in the Nurseries are intrusive within views from the wider landscape and adversely affect the setting of the listed buildings
6. *Great Wood* - Clothing the western side of the main valley Great Wood is the largest area of woodland in Brighton and Hove and is one of the most visually prominent features of the landscape of Stanmer. The woodland was wholly the product of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century design layout and several elements of the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century formal layout have survived within it. The wood was severely damaged by the 1987 storm and there

is significant visual and noise intrusion from the A27. The post war planting policy in the Forest Garden has adversely affected the character of the woodland in views from the surrounding landscape

7. *Chalk Ridge Woodlands* - Comprising woodland belts and plantations along the crest of the ridge which defines the eastern side of the main valley and forms a near continuous wooded horizon around the eastern edge of the Parkland. This woodland was wholly the product of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century design layout. It was severely damaged by the 1987 storm, altering the character of the perimeter path. Furthermore, part of the historic circulation system that provided some of the best views across the parkland to the House has been lost.

8. *Coldean Woodland* - Comprising a mosaic of small fields and woodland blocks and belts forming south western corner of the site. It is physically separated from the remainder of the site by the A27 but remains as a distinct woodland boundary to the designed landscape

### **7.0 PUBLIC ACCESS AND VISITOR FACILITIES**

The main entrance to Stanmer is at South Lodge. This is the most widely used by visitors, as well as by vehicles serving the House, Village, Walled Garden and Nursery complex. This generates a significant amount of traffic through the heart of the parkland area, including both cars and commercial vehicles.

The study area is crossed by several public rights of way and integrates well with the surrounding network of footpath and bridleway routes. There are public footpaths around the whole of the northern, western and southern sides of the site, which link together to form a continuous route around these boundaries.

The open mown grassland in the Parkland to the south of the House is designated as public open space. There is also open public access to most of the woodlands on the site. However, the majority of the site area has either restricted or no public access, particularly the eastern and northern areas. This has interrupted the historical designed circulation network around the Estate.

The site is well served by public transport. Falmer station lies immediately to the south of the A27. The No 79 bus route from central Brighton follows the Ditchling Road, with a stop adjacent to the Upper Lodges. The No 78 bus route was introduced in 1999 specifically to provide a link from central Brighton to Stanmer Park. Buses enter the park via the south entrance, following the drive past the House before looping around the church and heading back along the drive and out again. Within the park, the buses stop anywhere upon request and travel is free for journeys within the park.

There are, officially, 6 public car parks within the site, namely the Duke's Car Park; Coldean Belt Car Park; Church Car Park; Stanmer House Car Park (in front of the eastern façade); Chalk Hill Car Park and Ditchling Road Car Park. In addition, there are several areas within the Walled Gardens and the Nursery complex which are used for staff parking. But despite the provision of formal parking areas, many visitors park alongside the South Drive. This parking is randomly strung out alongside the drive, sometimes utilising the surviving concrete areas constructed for parking tanks during the War. Elsewhere cars are parked directly onto the grass verge. This informal parking is an unsightly element which effects the character of much of the parkland area. It also causes significant damage to the grassland and vegetation through wear and tear.

There are a range of facilities for visitors to Stanmer including the Church; a small shop & café/restaurant within the Village; the Stanmer Rural Museum lying immediately to the north west of the House and two operational toilet buildings. There are also currently four football pitches located in the south of the Parkland area, together with two cricket pitches.

There are a number of initiatives run through the Council's Countryside Service which encourage the involvement of local volunteer groups in the management of the Estate, in particular the woodlands. These are supported and supplemented by assistance from the Sussex Downs Conservation Board. Furthermore, the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society organises field walking, geophysical investigations, excavations, guided walks and talks for members of the general public.

Stanmer Park hosts a number of large organised events throughout the year and has also been identified as the Council's most viable venue for large music events. This generates a large number of visitors to the Park from across a wide region.

### **8.0 ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

We have reviewed and compiled existing ecological data to identify recorded habitats, rare and protected species and areas of ecological sensitivity across the site. This has revealed that there are several protected and notable animal and invertebrate species, although it appears that many of these are recorded as random sightings and no formal surveys appear to have been conducted for many species groups.

The plant species lists appear more comprehensive, but the lack of information regarding location and quantity of protected species means that it is very difficult to make any evaluation. The species lists do show that there are a number of notable and protected species present and that the habitat quality (in particular woodland and grassland) is apparently high.

Information on species can be used to evaluate sites and habitats, but this is only useful if there are details of observer competence, survey methodology and quantitative values regarding the species. Using the information, it is clear that there are important habitats on the site, especially the woodland and grassland.

### **9.0 AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT**

There are three Council Policy documents which are relevant to a consideration of the farmland at Stanmer, namely; The 1987 Interim Farm Ownership Policy; the Sustainability Strategy published in May 2002, which includes the objective to integrate biodiversity conservation into the management of the City Council's farmland estate and the 2003 Draft Vision Statement to guide the management of Downland.

Within the Study Area, some 250 ha of land and an associated farmstead are in active agricultural use. The Stanmer Home Farm is owned by Brighton and Hove City Council and occupied by a tenant farmer. The majority of this land, extending beyond the study area to approximately 800 acres, is held under an Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy. This provides the tenant with security of tenure.

All of the soils within the farmland are well-drained and consequently can be cultivated in all seasons. They are identified by the Soil Survey as well to moderately well suited to cereal production and under grass their well drained nature reduces poaching potential and enables the out wintering of stock in sheltered situations (MAFF Classification Grade 3).

Home Farm operates from two complexes of buildings located separately at opposite ends of the main street of Stanmer village. At the southern end are the Farm House and a variety of livestock and storage buildings. These straddle the street and have access onto it. They comprise buildings primarily of traditional forms of construction, size and layout. These are largely of brick and flint construction and are grouped around three small yards. A large timber clad barn adjoins the main street and to its rear is a small, modern covered yard. All the buildings appear to be in a sound condition, but their design and layout is not that associated with modern commercial farming requirements and practices.

At the northern end of the Village is a complex of substantial modern portal frame buildings, some of which are open sided and others of which are enclosed by a cladding of profile sheeting. These buildings are typical of those one would expect to find associated with current arable requirements and practices.

Prior to 2002, the Farm supported a dairy enterprise, with associated arable activity. Subsequently, the dairy enterprise was terminated. The tenant has adjusted by taking advantage of the farm's location within the South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area. The area of arable land has been reduced by a transfer of land into conservation grassland for which financial support is available under the ESA scheme, and a cattle herd is in the process of being developed to utilise the increased grassland area.

A grassland management plan has been drawn up by the farm tenant as a requirement of the ESA scheme, but this is not available to the Council. Since the tenancy is a full agricultural tenancy, the agricultural component of the eventual overall Restoration Management Plan is, in large measure, dependent for its delivery on the support and co-operation of the tenant.

It was clearly an appropriate decision on the part of the Estate's tenant to take advantage of the existence of the support available through the ESA scheme. The removal or reduction in cultivation activity is more sustainable in terms of the soil resources and of soil-based cultural and archaeological resources and it is also beneficial to wildlife. However, the change to an all grassland management system has certain dis-benefits in terms of the historic landscape, resulting in the loss of arable cultivation within the core of the study area which was an important component of the designed landscape established during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century which will have had considerable influence upon its layout.

The use of grazing livestock in the management of chalk grassland is central to the achievement of ESA objectives for species diversity and for bird life. However, in the medium term there appears to be a significant disparity between the current stocking levels (30No cattle) and the proposed stocking levels (60No cattle) identified by the farmer and the area of available grassland (possibly in excess of 200 hectares).

If stock numbers are substantially increased, even within an extensive grazing regime, then the need for some in-wintering of stock is likely to increase, as is the quantity of organic waste to be handled. The current livestock facilities at Home Farm are somewhat antiquated and not commensurate with modern standards of housing or waste management. As the extent of previous arable activity on the farm has reduced, or even been removed, the question is raised as to the future usage of the large modern farm buildings to the northern end of Stanmer Village, which are of a design associated with such activity. Thus, the detail of grassland management plan may have significant implications for the two complexes of existing farm buildings at the north and south ends of the Village.

It is questionable whether the traditional farm buildings at the southern end of Stanmer village are sustainable in the longer-term as the basis for the management of the main livestock enterprise serving the whole farm. However, the presence of these buildings and their continued use for agriculture are considered to be a fundamental component within the character of the Village and the Estate as a whole.

### **10.0 PRESSURES ON STANMER**

There are a number of factors which, in our view, have lead to significant pressure on Stanmer Park and which have a bearing upon the quality and character of the landscape.

Whilst ownership passed to a single organisation in 1947, management responsibility was devolved to a number of different departments within the Council. Direct control over the agricultural land was further devolved following the decision to let-out the farmland – which makes up the majority of the study area – on a secure agricultural tenancy and letting-out parcels of land within the Nurseries. There are now a number of different bodies which have an interest in Stanmer or which have responsibility for a particular aspect of its management. There is, therefore, no longer any one person or department with overall control of the site and through which each management decision must pass before it is enacted. This means that there is no longer an holistic approach towards the management of the Estate as a whole

The large number of vehicle movements through the Park leading to the Village, the Walled Garden, the Nurseries complex and by users of the park in general are highly intrusive. Added to this, the current provision and control of parking within the Park as a whole is inadequate and results in further intrusion.

Most of the developments carried out since the Estate passed into public ownership have been detrimental to the visual quality of the study area. Many have resulted in the physical loss of hitherto undeveloped

landscape. The pressure for further development within and around the site will undoubtedly lead to a further erosion of visual quality.

In the absence of any form of control over access into the Park at night, it has become a favoured area for joy riders. This not only results in direct physical damage but has also led to the installation of physical barriers in an effort to prevent future incursions which are in themselves visually intrusive.

Much of the historic infrastructure at Stanmer is in poor condition. The continued decline in the condition of the buildings and structures within the study area is the result of insufficient financial investment over a period of time.

In the past, arable cultivation of land identified as being Archaeologically Sensitive would inevitably have resulted in a degree of plough damage. Since the majority of the farmland was entered into the ESA scheme in 2002, this pressure has been arrested, at least for the time being. However, if the tenant were to choose to opt out of ESA after 5 years or not to renew the agreement after the end of 10 years, then these threats to the landscape might return.

There are also pressures for events and sports activities. Some of the organised events that have taken place in the Park have attracted rather more people than the organisers expected, resulting in traffic congestion problems locally and uncontrolled parking. Despite the existence of the Outdoor Events Policy, organised events have resulted in some physical damage to the playing fields which has to be made good afterwards. The number and type of events and their management therefore need to be carefully controlled.

### 11.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF STANMER

Stanmer is a splendid rural estate. The Village at its centre, complete with church, working farm, 18<sup>th</sup> Century mansion, stables and walled garden, combine to form a nucleus to the site, dividing it into two halves. There are broad tracts of parkland to the South and farmland to the North. It is visually self contained. The open and undulating central area is enclosed by woodlands planted along the valley sides to the North, East and West. There are expansive views in all directions across the surrounding Downland landscape from this higher ground around the edges.

The particular significance of Stanmer is summarised as follows:

- It forms an integral part of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- There are a wide array of archaeological remains throughout the site. Three are of outstanding national importance, nine are of regional significance, two are locally important.
- Much of the study area was the subject of a Royal Charter in AD765. Most of this area remains within a single ownership and to a large degree undeveloped
- Stanmer House was built between 1722 and 1728 to the designs of the architect Nicolas Dubois. Listed as Grade I, this building is of “*exceptional*” national importance.
- The landscape at Stanmer forms the setting for a further 28 listed buildings and structures which are of national historical importance.
- The village of Stanmer has been in continuous existence at the centre of the study area since at least 1086. The present village is a fine example of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century working Estate Village
- Stanmer is an excellent example of a surviving 18<sup>th</sup> Century designed landscape of national historic importance containing design elements by Nicolas Dubois and possibly by Nathaniel Richmond.
- The design layout developed during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century adopted a more informal approach, but significant elements of the earlier formal layout were retained
- The survey by William Figg, dated 1799 to 1800 is a truly remarkable record of the Estate. Almost the whole of the area of the designed landscape shown by Figg remains in a single ownership. Much of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century design layout has survived to the present day.
- The existing woodlands were a principal component of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century design.

- The Figg plan demonstrates that the arable farmland was incorporated as an integral part of the designed landscape at Stanmer by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, consistent with the design principals of the *Ferme Ornee*.
- The ecological quality of certain parts of the woodlands and grasslands is high.
- The southern half of the study area is designated as a proposed Local Nature Reserve.
- Five nationally rare species of plant have been identified at Stanmer. A further five plant species have been identified which are nationally scarce.
- A number of protected species of mammals have been identified as living within the site
- Stanmer Park is very popular and well used by the public.
- The site is a resource for education and interpretation, with frequent demonstrations on a variety of rural activities, ecology and archaeology.
- Stanmer is the venue for numerous local, regional and nation events throughout the year.
- The facilities within the former Nurseries provide a range of activities which are a valuable resource contributing to the wider community within the Brighton area.

### 12.0 CONSERVATION POLICIES & OBJECTIVES

The significance of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century design and the degree to which it remains complete cannot be overemphasised, particularly given the precise detail in which this layout was recorded by William Figg in 1800. We have, therefore, concluded that this plan should form the basis around which the future management of the landscape at Stanmer should be framed.

But in reaching this conclusion we have been acutely aware of two points. Firstly, a large estate such as Stanmer will never stand still, it will necessarily have to evolve through time to accommodate changing circumstances, needs and demands of those who make use of it. Secondly, some aspects of development that have taken place since 1800 have proved highly beneficial and make a significant contribution to the aesthetic quality of the landscape as well as enhancing the ecological and cultural significance of the estate as a whole.

We are not, therefore, suggesting that Stanmer should be “restored” to the layout shown by Figg. However, we are suggesting that from this point forward the management of the Estate should seek to re-establish the broad layout, visual qualities and character of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century landscape, whilst accommodating, as far as possible, the existing uses which are current today.

In view of this we have identified a wide range of twenty-one conservation policies and objectives which should be adopted as guidance for the future management of the estate.

### 13.0 OUTLINE PROPOSALS

In addition, we have identified an extensive range of outline proposals aimed at conserving, restoring and enhancing the landscape, in line with the policies and objectives. These are set out under the following headings:

- Management and Implementation (M)
- Interpretation and Visitor Facilities (I)
- Vehicle Movement and Car Parking (V)
- Pedestrian Movement and Paths (P)
- Clearance Works (C)
- New Planting (N)
- Grassland Character (G)
- Woodland and Tree Management (W)
- Nature Conservation (NC)
- Farming (F)

- Historic Infrastructure and Built Fabric (B)
- Archaeology (A)
- Nurseries Complex (NU)
- Stanmer House and Stables (SH)
- Existing and Future Land Uses (LU)

These proposals are intended to be viewed as an ultimate ‘Vision’ for Stanmer and, as such, include works to be carried out in the short term as well as those which would be implemented over a more extended time span.