

# 4.0

## CONSERVATION STRATEGY

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION AND SIGNIFICANCE

### Introduction

Since its acquisition in 1972, the local authority has maintained the historic estate as a public park. It is recognised as a unique resource within Dún Laoghaire Rathdown under the designation of a Regional park. DLRCC has actively sought to conserve and manage the historic fabric of the park, with restoration works previously carried out on structures including; Marlay House, Laurelmere, the Craft Courtyard and the Walled Garden. It is recommended that additional structures within the park be preserved to secure the historic fabric and, where applicable, a new use sought for them. Overall, the park is a fine example of a picturesque 18th century landscape design. The ponds, bridges, weirs, ha-ha and surrounding demesne wall form the architectural character of the site and require regular maintenance.

The planting within the park has evolved through self-seeding and insensitive alterations which have the potential to put the historic arrangement at risk. Going forward, a management plan will inform and guide the removal of invasive and inappropriate planting without impacting the character of the established plantations.

The underlying principles for the Masterplan within Marlay Park focus on conservation, protection, and enhancement. The Masterplan aims to find the balance between conservation and development. It is essential that the intrinsic qualities of the park are maintained and restored where required while managing the ever increasing visitor numbers and pressures for facilities. Through the site analysis, the key attributes of this 18th century landscape park have been identified. As part of the Masterplan, the Council seeks to implement a co-ordinated, heritage-led approach to the management and development of the park.



View of ha-ha field and Marlay House (1978), Marlay Park



View of Dining Room, Marlay House (1966), Marlay Park

### Significance:

Marlay Park is the last remaining intact landscaped garden set out by renowned landscape designer Thomas Leggett in Ireland. Section 3 of this document includes an analysis of the history, the built and natural heritage of Marlay Park. It is clear from this analysis that Marlay Park has considerable significance as a historic landscape allied with its strategic importance as an amenity. Many of the structures within Marlay Park have Regional Heritage Significance including Marlay House, many of the lodges and cottages, the courtyard and farm yard, much of the demesne wall, some gates and piers, the lakes and some bridges. The natural and cultural history of the park should be easily accessible to the general public to improve understanding and appreciation of this attractive public amenity.



## 4.2 VULNERABILITIES / THREATS

### Vulnerabilities

The vulnerabilities and threats to Marlay Park include the following;

- Awareness & Education: – general public, staff
- Events – wear and tear
- Overdevelopment – demand for further development/facilities within Marlay Park
- Urban sprawl - Re-zoning of lands to the south of Marlay Park may have a significant impact on the Historic Landscape.
- Accessibility: – general public

### Aims & Objectives:

There are 15 aims and objectives outlined in Section 1 of this document. The following aims & objectives relate to the conservation strategy;

1. To put in place a long term vision for Marlay Park that arranges the elements into a logical order to maximise the parks amenity value within the context of the historic landscape.
2. To protect and enhance the natural heritage, the flora and fauna of the site.
3. To conserve and protect the built heritage and provide suitable, sympathetic and sustainable uses for the properties in the setting of the historic landscape.



*The Book Room by Anne LaTouche (1839), Marlay House*



*View of Marlay House (1966), Marlay Park*

With these overarching aims & objectives in mind, the following strategic conservation aims & objectives have been developed;

- To commit to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic character of the park.
- To seek to ensure any new developments will not adversely affect the amenity and value of the park.
- Historic views and vistas are to be preserved from obstruction, and reinstated where applicable. Plantations to screen intrusive external developments are encouraged.
- To provide for the effective maintenance of the park and its associated structures.
- To protect, conserve and enhance the plant and animal habitats within the park.
- Ensure succession planting management, using appropriate species.
- To promote awareness of the history of the site and its importance in the landscape historically, culturally, architecturally and its biodiversity value through permanent exhibitions.
- Ensure suitably qualified professionals are present to direct required repairs on associated historic structures, informed by current best practices in conservation and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) Conservation Guidelines.
- To seek the restoration and repair of structures within the park and provide suitable uses for them, where applicable, which will not detract from their architectural character.
- To improve and enhance pedestrian access and safety for all without adversely impacting the historic character of the park.
- To promote the park as a cultural asset and public amenity



## 4.3 POLICY AND PROTECTION

### **Built Heritage**

The architectural heritage within the park should be retained and repaired wherever appropriate. It is preferable to oppose the loss of any historic fabric unless a comprehensive, compelling proposal is put forward to suggest otherwise. Often, minor alterations to the fabric of protected structures can impact on their character and special interest. To ensure the right balance is struck between the changing demands and the continued use of the buildings, it is vital that proposed works be thoroughly assessed and evaluated prior to implementation.

Repairs to enhance the built heritage in Marlay Park should be carried out to the highest conservation standards, and should avoid over restoration making them materially unidentifiable from the original. The interventions should be simple in nature and easily reversible using similar methods and materials. Where new interventions are proposed they must be sympathetic to their surroundings while representing quality modern design ideals and standards.

When undertaking any works to protected structures or heritage structures as identified in the Built Heritage Inventory, the following steps will be undertaken;

- Prepare an outline brief/user requirements for the proposed change and state why it is considered necessary.
- Prepare a photographic and measured survey of the section of the building or its curtilage that is the subject of the proposed changes.
- Undertake opening up works as required under the supervision of a suitably qualified professional such as a conservation architect.
- Undertake historic research as required and report on the findings.
- Analyse the desired change and examine how it might be achieved in the most sensitive and appropriate manner, in accordance with good conservation practice.
- Prepare drawings of the proposed alteration/intervention together with a method statement setting out how it is going to be carried out.
- Assess the impact of the proposed changes on the character of the protected structure.
- Carry out an internal review of the material listed above, evaluating the proposed changes and determine if the changes are in accordance with good conservation practice utilising the guidance given in DEHLG "Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities" for assistance. There are 3 possible outcomes to the internal review -
  - o the proposals are considered not to materially affect the building and therefore are not required to undergo the Part VIII procedure
  - o the proposed works are considered to have an impact upon the architectural significance of the building or the proposals do not adhere to good conservation practice, then the proposal should be re-examined; allowing a suitable and creative solution to be explored.
  - o the proposals are considered to materially affect the building (either in a positive or neutral manner) and are therefore required to follow the Part VIII procedure.
- Keep a record of the approved changes.
- Implement the changes and on completion keep a building record on file.

All development proposals potentially impacting on Protected Structures shall have regard to the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2011). All works should comply with BS 7913

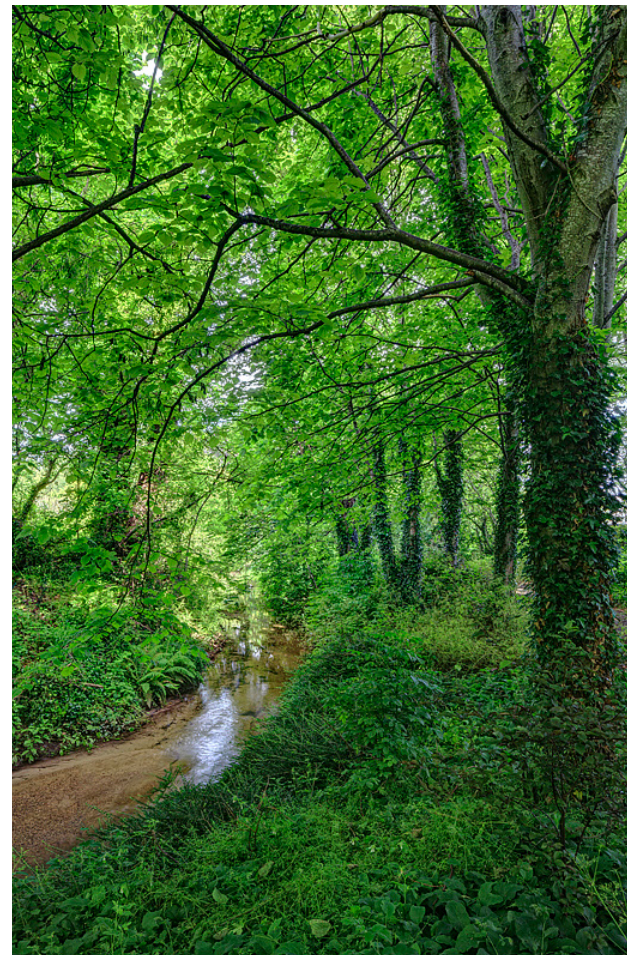


Interior views of Marlay House (1990), Marlay Park



Interior views of Marlay House restoration works (2000), Marlay Park





### **Tree Protection Orders (TPOs)**

There are currently no Tree Preservation Orders within Marlay Park. However all work undertaken on trees on site requires the approval of management.

### **Wildlife Act**

The Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht, through the National Parks and Wildlife Service, are responsible for the designation of natural conservation sites within Ireland. Areas listed as the directives below are given statutory protection.

- Statutory Nature Reserves
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)

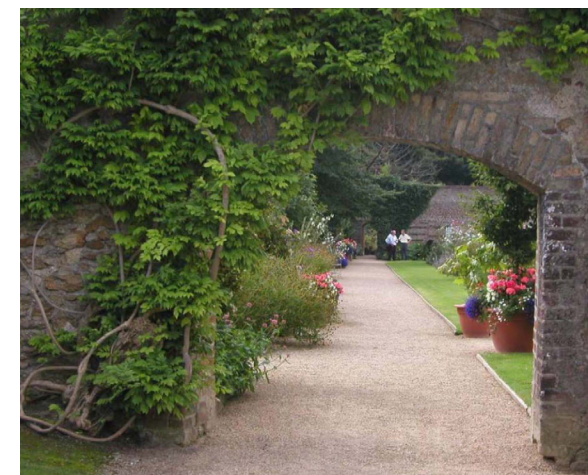
At present, there are no statutory nature conservation designations within Marlay Park, although individual species within the park are protected.

### **Statutory Protection**

All development proposals potentially impacting on Protected Structures and places designated as Architectural Conservation Areas and candidate Architectural Conservation Areas shall have regard to the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2011). Much of Marlay Park and its heritage structures are protected through policy of the County Development Plan 2016-2022. Many of these are outlined in Section 2 of this document.

Listed within the Record of Protected Structures, as set out in Appendix 4 of the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022 are Marlay House and Courtyard and Laurelmere cottage. Structures put forward for consideration by the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht to be placed under statutory protection following a survey by the NIAH are:

- Stable Complex (Regional) 60220012
- Walled Garden (Regional) 60220013
- Head Gardener's Cottage (Regional) 60220014
- Farmyard Stables/Staff Depot (Regional) 60220016
- Gateway on Grange Road (Regional) 60220017
- Gateway on Grange Road (Regional) 60220019
- Gate Lodge on Grange Road (Regional) 60220020
- Gate Lodge on Grange Road (Regional) 60220021





**Relevant charters, legislation, designation and conventions:**

ICOMOS – The International Council on Monuments and Sites (Florence Charter, 1981)

The Florence Charter sets out the practical guidelines for the protection of historic parks and gardens. It defines them as architectural compositions and recommends their preservation as living monuments. The Charter sets out a framework to allow the custodians of these sites to make sound decisions on their maintenance strategies, restoration and conservation.

The following articles are contained within the ICOMOS Florence Charter and are relevant to Marlay Park:

- Art 1:** An historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view. As such, to be considered a monument.
- Art 2:** The historic garden is an architectural composition whose constituents are primarily vegetal and therefore living, which means that they are perishable and renewable.
- Art 4:** The architectural composition of the historic garden includes:
- i) Its plan and topography
  - ii) Its vegetation, including its species, proportions, colour schemes, spacing and respective heights.
  - iii) Its structural and decorative features.
- Art 5:** As the expression of the direct affinity between civilisation and nature, and as a place of enjoyment suited to meditation or repose, the garden thus acquires the cosmic significance.
- Art 10:** In any work of maintenance, conservation, restoration or reconstruction of an historic garden, or any part of it, all its constituent features must be dealt with simultaneously. To isolate the various operations would damage the unity of the whole.
- Art 11:** Continuous maintenance of historic gardens is of paramount importance. Since the principal material is vegetal, the preservation of the garden in an unchanged condition requires both prompt replacements when required and a long-term programme of periodic renewal (clear felling and replanting with mature specimens).
- Art 19:** By reason of its nature and purpose, an historic garden is a peaceful place conducive to human contacts, silence and awareness of nature. This conception of its everyday use must contrast its role on those rare occasions when it accommodates festivity.
- Art 20:** While historic gardens may be suitable for quiet games as a daily occurrence, separate areas appropriate for active and lively games and sports should also be laid out adjacent to the historic garden, so that the needs of the public may be satisfied in this respect without prejudice to the conservation of the gardens and landscapes.
- Art 21:** The work of maintenance and conservation, the timing of which is determined by season, and brief operations, which serve to restore the garden's authenticity, must always take precedence over the requirements of public use.
- Art 22:** If a garden is walled, its walls may not be removed without prior examination of all the possible consequences liable to lead to changes in its atmosphere and to affect its preservation.
- Art 25:** Interest in historic garden should be stimulated by every kind of activity capable of emphasising their true value as part of the natural heritage.

The European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention)

This European convention, of which Ireland is a signatory, came into force in March 2004. It provides a unified framework for the conservation, planning and management of European landscapes. Ireland's commitment to the convention was ratified in the National Landscape Strategy (2015-2025) which provides measures for the protection, management and planning of the landscape.

Additional conservation designation which are relevant to the management and conservation of historic landscape sites include; The Venice Charter (1964) and The Burra Charter (revised 1999).

## 4.4 OPPORTUNITIES

### **Further Protection:**

There is an opportunity to include the 2018 Marlay Masterplan as a specific objective of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan as part of the 2022 plan.

### **Historic Planting**

Generally, Marlay Park is well maintained, with seasonal planting displays and manicured areas around the park, however, given its scale it would benefit from an overall planting management plan that focuses on the removal of invasive and overgrown plantations, and the sympathetic replanting of historic trees and plant species.

### **Views and Prospects**

The park is of a predominantly gently sloping southerly aspect, laid out with sweeping lawns and framed views of the Dublin Mountains. These views form an essential aspect of the park, providing a sense of space, scale and visual interest.

Any proposals for the park must ensure the landscape character and topography of the site is protected and enhanced while facilitating suitable high quality new additions to the park for the benefit of the public. There is an opportunity to include the protection of the view from Marlay House in a southerly direction towards the Dublin Mountains in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan as part of the 2022 plan.



### **Access:**

At present, vehicles within the park share a surface with pedestrians which present risks. Any decision to improve universal access and public safety for all within the park needs to be balanced with the preservation of its historic value. As per Section 29 of the Disability Act 2005

"As far as practicable, ensure that the whole or a part of the heritage site in its ownership, management or control to which the public has access is accessible to persons with disabilities and can be visited by them with ease and dignity"

This policy shall not apply if its application:

- (i) Has a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the heritage site, or
- (ii) Could compromise the characteristics of the site.

### **Interpretation and Signage:**

Although there are some display panels on the perimeter of the park with information on the site, users of Marlay Park would benefit greatly from the provision of a more in-depth knowledge of their surroundings. As part of the SMART park initiative, the provision of digital information and unified signage within the park will provide a platform to bring awareness and educate on the rich history of the park, its groups and events.



*The Garden School, Marlay Park*

### **Education:**

The staff managing Marlay Park should be made aware of all the heritage features within the park. Guided walks provided by the garden school, as well as independent parties interested in the natural and built heritage of the site. Encourage involvement from local schools and youth organisations and educational walks providing information on the history of the area and landmarks along the route.

### **Promotion:**

There is an opportunity to promote the natural and built heritage of Marlay Park further and the craft work being undertaken in the craft courtyard.

### **Health & Safety**

Marlay Park presents potential risks to public safety along its riparian corridors and shared use access roads. However, a measured approach to improved safety is needed to conserve the historic natural and built environment within the park.

### **Events:**

There may be an opportunity to put more stringent conditions on event organisers to ensure the protection of Marlay Park.

### **Links:**

Links with other similar sites should be explored for sharing plants, knowledge, etc