

Building a resilient future for Oldway
Report to Oldway Working Party meeting 12.06.23

Client: Torbay Council

Prepared by: Katherine Findlay, project director

Date: 06.06.23

Introduction

Developing a resilient future for Oldway is an 18-month project funded by a grant of £149,038 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and a contribution of £87,500 from Torbay Council. The project aims to lay the groundwork for a viable future for Oldway by producing a master plan for the site. We are also working with Torbay Council, voluntary groups, local stakeholders, potential commercial partners, NLHF and Historic England to develop a sustainable future operating model.

The project employs a team of freelance contractors who specialise in:

- Heritage project management
- Historic building conservation and management
- Historic garden conservation and management
- Building and landscape architecture
- Heritage sector business planning
- Consultation, engagement and evaluation

This report was requested by Alan Denby to give working party members a summary of the project at this stage. For more detail, please refer to the monthly progress reports that are presented to the project board and circulated to the working party. Queries about the project can be sent to katherine@katherinefindlay.co.uk

Progress to date

The project has been running for 11 months in total and is on track to finish by the end of this year. Activities that have been completed so far include:

- Comparator sites review
- Retrofit assessment for Mansion
- Condition survey of Mansion (interior and exterior)
- Condition survey of Rotunda and adjoining complex (external only)
- Cost estimates for repairs to Mansion (internal & external)
- Cost estimates for Mansion fit out
- Cost estimate for repairs to roof & external envelop of Rotunda & banqueting hall
- Conservation assessment of Mansion roof (leading to emergency works Q1 2023)
- Statement of significance for Mansion + gazetteers
- Significance diagrams for Mansion
- Market research – weddings/catering/residential
- Review of office accommodation needs & potential
- Desk capacity report
- Governance review

- Specialist advice on East Tower
- Evaluation framework
- Stakeholder engagement and consultation plan
- Consultation materials
- Oldway Primary School garden design competition
- Stakeholder engagement sessions x 2
- Site and context appraisal
- Opportunities and constraints summary
- Vision development
- Initial concept options
- Floor layout options for Mansion
- Garden CMP documentary review

Current activities

The project is now in a period of public consultation. This is a first phase, formative consultation that is intended to test the emerging vision and how it aligns with the public's priorities to inform the masterplan. The consultation materials are appended to this report and the survey can be completed here:

<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/consultations/oldway-consultation/>

The consultation launched on 1st June and will continue throughout the month. The online survey received has so far received an excellent response with 513 returns in the first four days. The project team attended the English Riviera Airshow where hundreds of people talked to us about Oldway. The overall impression was that the vast majority were highly engaged and positive about the project. The next event is at Oldway on Saturday 17th June.

Throughout the project we have engaged with an invited group of stakeholders to test ideas at a series of sessions. This work continues and the next workshop is at Oldway Primary School on Wednesday 14th June.

Other current activities include:

- Statement of significance for Rotunda complex
- Final edit of Mansion viability appraisal
- Early stages Rotunda viability appraisal
- Final write-up of buildings CMP
- Next stage planning in partnership with NLHF & HE
- Development support for FoO & OGG
- Garden CMP condition survey
- Spatial planning for grounds

Next steps

The next phase will involve collating and processing the results of the public consultation and all the other outputs of the project so far. These will inform the further development of the masterplan including recommendations for a phased approach to work over the next decade. In parallel we intend to develop a Heritage Enterprise grant application for the Rotunda to bring it back into commercial use as the first stage of the site's restoration and reuse.

Developing a resilient future for Oldway

Torbay Council is asking local people to help shape a viable future for the Oldway estate in Paignton

The buildings and grounds are much loved by our communities, but they now need significant investment and new purposes. Our project is exploring how the site could become a thriving community space and conserve the magnificent mansion and gardens for future generations.

Thanks to National Lottery players, Torbay Council has been able to employ a team of specialists to assess the conservation needs, estimate the costs of restoration and refurbishment, and identify viable future uses for the whole site.

This project is the latest stage of a process that began in 2018. We have worked closely with local stakeholders including the Oldway Gardens Group and the Friends of Oldway to develop a vision for the future of the site.

Now we want to know what you think so that we can further improve and refine our ideas. Together we can create a sustainable, achievable and inspiring proposal.



Stay up to date with this project:
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What could Oldway be in the future?

A community-focused health, wellbeing and creative hub within the historic setting of Oldway



A place to celebrate Oldway's heritage

The distinctive heritage of the Mansion and Gardens will be celebrated and made accessible to the local community and visitors to Torbay. Oldway Mansion and its associated buildings will be restored and brought into sustainable and resilient uses that secure the long term viable future of the site.

A place for communities to come together

Oldway will continue to be valued for both its historic significance and connections to individuals and families across Torbay. It will provide a range of inclusive and accessible activities and will be reinstated as a beautiful venue for weddings and other events. There will be opportunities for volunteers to work in partnership with Torbay Council to care for the buildings and gardens and maximise the benefits of the site to the local community.

A place for creativity and discovery

Oldway will be a hub for creative events and activities. The mansion will provide creative spaces and space for exhibition and events. The gardens will be a venue for formal and informal activities.

A place to connect with nature

Oldway's trees, gardens, wildlife and views will be celebrated and conserved for the benefit of the community; the site will provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy and connect with nature.

A place to be active and relax

Oldway will provide a diverse range of formal and informal leisure and recreation activities that enhance health and wellbeing and facilitate community connections. Bowls and Tennis Courts will be supplemented with additional sport, leisure and play facilities.



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Challenges



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Heritage conservation

Oldway's historic buildings and gardens need careful restoration and maintenance

The whole Oldway site is listed, meaning that it is protected by law from inappropriate changes. Oldway Mansion is listed at Grade II* while the gardens, Rotunda and banqueting hall are listed at Grade II.

Oldway is important in the South West region for its architecture, garden design and history, and it has some elements that are internationally important.

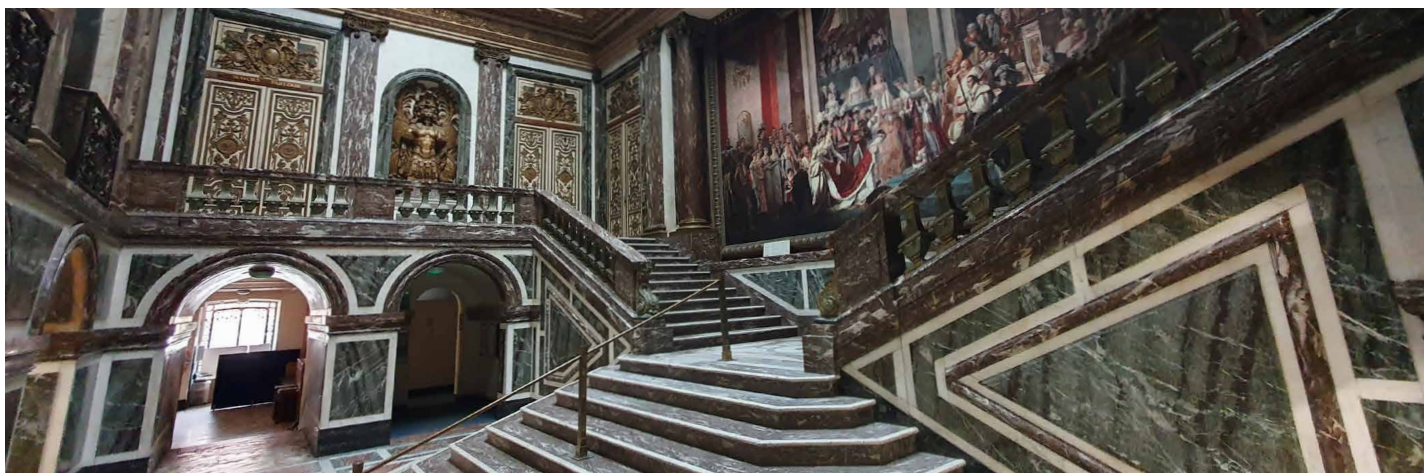
A recent survey of the buildings identified urgent problems including substantial decay to the roofs, cracking to the mansion colonnade and rainwater getting into the internal structures.

As well as the need to repair damage, there are complex challenges for future use including where

to locate parking and what interventions are needed to make the mansion energy efficient.

Included in the masterplan will be conservation plans that set out how the buildings and grounds can be restored in a way that balances heritage needs with new and viable uses. They will also consider how to bring together Torbay Council, volunteers, local communities and partners to care for the site in the long term. If Torbay Council adopts the recommendations, the restoration will need to be carried out in phases and could take around 10 years to complete.

Early estimates indicate that the total cost to repair, restore and fit out the buildings for new use will be at least £30 million. In addition, there will be the costs of restoring the landscape and reconfiguring the parking.



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Oldway gardens

Oldway is an important green space in the heart of Paignton. The gardens will be restored and enhanced to encourage more people to visit this beautiful park for a range of activities.



A place to celebrate Oldway's heritage

- Restored historic gardens and buildings
- Interpretation and signage
- Cultural events
- Heritage volunteering

A place for communities to come together

- Access for everyone
- Places to meet
- Community activities
- Café with outdoor seating
- Garden weddings

A place for creativity and discovery

- Open-air cinema, theatre and festivals
- Workshops and creative activities
- Education and training providers
- Links to local schools
- Public art

A place to connect with nature

- Garden volunteering
- Green space for all
- Biodiversity and wildlife habitats
- Nature trails

A place to be active and relax

- Signed and well-lit footpaths
- Places to sit and meet friends
- Outdoor fitness groups and classes
- Enhanced sport facilities
- Places to play



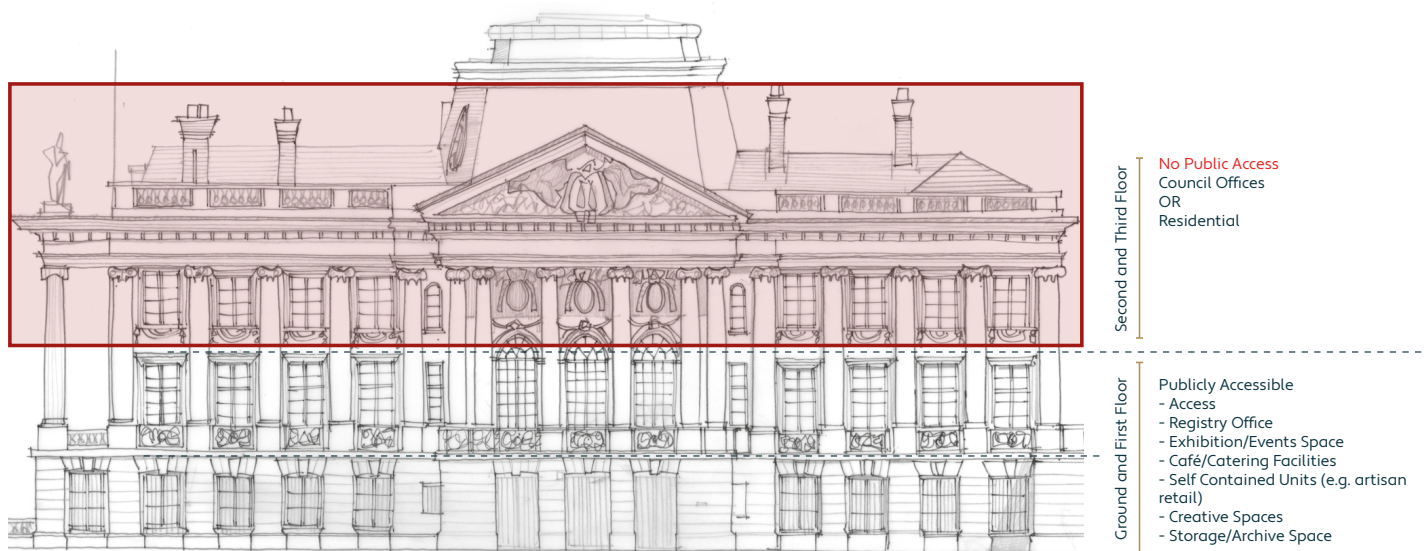
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Proposal for Oldway Mansion

Oldway Mansion will be restored to maximise benefits to the public and provide a venue for a range of uses that make financial sense.



Ideas for the lower floors of the Mansion could include a range of public activities including a cafe, Registry Office and wedding venue, and space for exhibitions and events.

The upper floors could be used for residential apartments or offices for Torbay Council.

Initial concept work demonstrates that both residential or council uses can work with separate access routes to the upper floors and meet current Building Regulations requirements.

Whatever the final proposal for Oldway it is important that it is financially viable for the long term.



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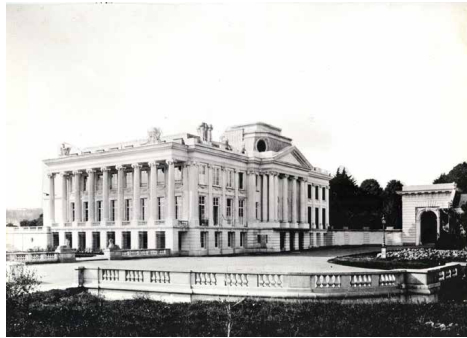
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Oldway past to present

The Oldway estate was created by Isaac Singer, the inventor of the Singer sewing machine, in the 1870s.



1873 - 1875
Isaac Singer - 'The Wigwam'



1897 - 1914
Paris Singer - Paignton's Versailles



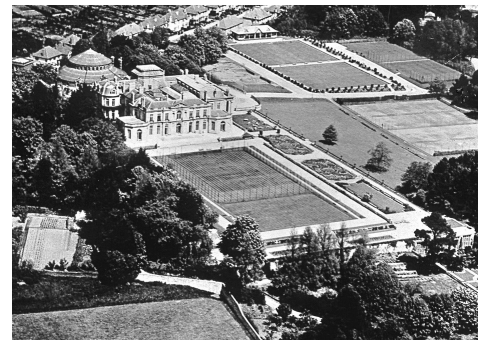
1914 - 1919
The American Women's War Hospital



2012 - 2018
Options explored for future of Oldway
(including DCA report)



1945 - 2012
Council Offices



1919 - 1945
Torbay Country Club



2019 - Ongoing
Oldway Gardens Group and the Friends of
Oldway help to care for the site.



2022 - Ongoing
'Developing a Resilient Future for Oldway'.
Project jointly funded by Torbay Council and NHLF.



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