



NONSUCH ESTATE

Assessment of Future Use Options for Nonsuch Estate

1. Introduction

1.1. The future of Nonsuch Estate has been carefully evaluated to identify a viable and sustainable use that secures the long-term conservation of Nonsuch House and its surroundings while contributing positively to the local economy. This report outlines the various options considered, the reasons for their rejection, and the rationale behind the proposed model of high-end visitor accommodation.

1.2.1. The estate's historical significance, rural location, and previous fire damage present both opportunities and challenges. The primary objective is to restore the estate in a way that is financially viable while preserving its heritage and ensuring its use remains compatible with its setting.

1.2.2. Theo Sturge ACR FIIC from Sturge Conservation Studio has been engaged to produce a report regarding the leather wallpaper from the entrance hall, which will follow shortly.

1.3. A range of potential options have been explored, including private residential use, commercial functions, educational or institutional uses, agricultural expansion, equestrian facilities, and high-end visitor accommodation. Each has been assessed against financial feasibility, heritage conservation, planning policy, and economic impact.

2. Alternative Uses Considered and Rejected

2.1. Private Residential Restoration

2.1.1. One option considered was restoring Nonsuch House for use as a single private residence while selling off the surrounding estate in separate parcels to help fund the works. However, this approach was deemed unviable for several reasons:

- The cost of restoring the house exceeds its potential market value as a private home.
- The estate's setting, including its proximity to a busy road, makes it less attractive for high-net-worth individuals seeking privacy.
- The fragmentation of the estate would undermine its historical integrity and long-term financial sustainability.
- Breaking up the estate would have a detrimental impact on the people of the village, who use the grounds for recreation.



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2.2. Residential Development

2.2.1. Development of housing on the estate was explored as a means of raising funds for restoration. However, this option was dismissed due to several constraints:

- The estate is located in a rural area with limited access to local services and infrastructure, making large-scale residential development unlikely to gain planning approval.
- Any development would detract from the character and setting of Nonsuch House, compromising its heritage value.
- The sale of land for housing would permanently alter the estate's character and limit opportunities for future economic diversification.
- The volume of housebuilding required to fund the restoration of the house would place an unreasonable burden on the village.

2.3. Office or Commercial Workspace

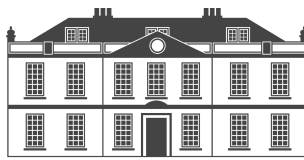
2.3.1. The possibility of repurposing Nonsuch House for office or commercial use was explored, considering demand for high-quality rural office space. However, the office market is experiencing a shift towards remote working, and the investment required to create modern workspaces would not be justified by the expected rental income. Additional issues include:

- The need for substantial alterations to create compliant office facilities, which could compromise heritage integrity.
- Limited demand for office space in this rural location and existing competition from nearby Bowood and Hartham Park.
- Insufficient return on investment to justify restoration costs.

2.4. Educational or Institutional Use

2.4.1. Transforming the estate into an educational facility, retreat centre, or institutional headquarters was examined, including possibilities such as a school, training centre, or arts foundation. However:

- The estate's rural location presents accessibility challenges for students and staff.
- The cost of converting and maintaining the property for institutional use would be substantial.
- Demand for such facilities is limited, making it difficult to secure long-term financial stability.



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2.5. Agricultural or Livery Expansion

2.5.1. An expansion of the estate's agricultural use, including the introduction of a livery yard, was considered. While the estate has extensive grounds, this approach was rejected due to:

- The local area already having a competitive equestrian market, making it difficult to generate significant income without undercutting existing businesses.
- Agricultural and livery enterprises typically yielding low financial returns relative to the investment required.
- Limited potential for such activities to fund the full restoration of Nonsuch House.

2.6. Care Home or Assisted Living Facility

2.6.1. Given the size and historical nature of the estate, a conversion into a care home or luxury assisted living facility has been considered. However, this is not a viable approach for several reasons:

- **Unsuitability of the Historic Building:** Retrofitting a Grade II* listed house to meet modern accessibility and regulatory standards (such as lifts, wide corridors, and emergency evacuation systems) would require significant and intrusive alterations, potentially compromising the building's heritage value.
- **High Operational Costs:** Staffing and maintaining a care facility would be exceptionally costly, and without economies of scale, the business would struggle to be financially sustainable.
- **Planning and Regulatory Challenges:** Securing the necessary permissions for a change of use to healthcare provision would be complex, and compliance with stringent Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulations would be difficult in a historic setting.
- **Lack of Demand:** While the UK has an ageing population, the location of the estate may not be attractive for elderly residents due to its rural setting, lack of nearby healthcare facilities, and limited transport links.



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2.7. Wedding and Events Venue

2.7.1. At first glance, converting Nonsuch Estate into a dedicated wedding and events venue may appear viable. However, several factors make this approach unsuitable:

- **Noise and Disruption:** Hosting regular large-scale events would generate significant noise and activity, potentially impacting neighbours and disrupting the tranquillity of the estate.
- **Seasonal and Inconsistent Revenue:** The events market is highly seasonal, with peak demand primarily in summer. This results in financial instability, making it difficult to sustain the estate's upkeep year-round.
- **Infrastructure Limitations:** Significant investment would be required for large-scale parking facilities, guest access, and additional amenities, placing further strain on the historic landscape.
- **Market Saturation:** There is already a high level of competition in the events market, with numerous established venues in the local vicinity offering similar settings, making it difficult to secure a profitable market share.

2.8. Boutique Shopping Village & Artisan Retail Hub

2.8.1. This concept would involve converting the estate into a collection of independent boutiques, artisanal shops, and high-end retail spaces, creating a "destination shopping experience."

2.8.2. Reasons for Rejection:

- **Lack of Footfall:** The estate's rural location is not conducive to high retail traffic, making it difficult to attract consistent visitor numbers. Unlike retail villages near major transport hubs, Nonsuch would struggle to generate sufficient footfall to sustain multiple businesses.
- **High Risk of Business Failure:** Small independent retailers typically require high levels of customer engagement and passing trade. Without this, many businesses would be unlikely to survive long-term, creating a cycle of vacancies and instability.
- **Planning & Infrastructure Challenges:** Converting historic buildings into retail spaces would require substantial modifications, including accessible shopfronts, storage areas, and substantial customer parking—all of which would impact the estate's character and require costly permissions.
- **Incompatibility with Heritage & Tranquillity:** A busy retail hub would generate significant noise, traffic, and deliveries, disrupting the peaceful atmosphere and conflicting with the estate's historic and natural setting.

2.9. Exclusive Private Members' Club

2.9.1. This model would involve converting Nonsuch Estate into a high-end, members-only retreat, offering dining, wellness, and social spaces for a select clientele.



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2.9.2. Reasons for Rejection:

- **High Barriers to Entry:** Competing with established private clubs (such as Soho House, 5 Hertford Street, or Babington House) would require a significant investment in facilities, branding, and networking to attract an elite clientele.
- **Direct Competition with Bowood Estate:** The nearby **Bowood Estate** already operates as a **luxury hotel, spa, and golf club**, offering exclusive experiences to high-net-worth individuals. With an established reputation, extensive amenities, and strong brand loyalty, Bowood would significantly limit the market opportunity for a new private club at Nonsuch Estate.
- **Uncertain Market Demand:** While private members' clubs thrive in urban locations, a rural setting presents challenges in attracting and retaining regular members, as travel logistics may deter frequent use.
- **Operational Challenges:** A club model relies on a strong social scene, requiring regular high-profile events, live entertainment, and networking opportunities. Creating this level of exclusivity and engagement would demand continuous investment and resources.
- **Financial Risk:** Many members' clubs struggle with fluctuating memberships and high operational costs. Unlike short-let accommodation, where revenue is tied to direct bookings, a members' club relies on long-term commitment from a niche customer base, making it a financially risky venture.

3. The Proposed Model: High-End Visitor Accommodation

3.1. Following a thorough assessment, the most viable and sustainable option for Nonsuch Estate is the creation of a high-end visitor accommodation/ farm stay business. This model provides a commercially sustainable use for the estate while preserving its historic character and enhancing the local economy. The key components of this proposal include:

- **Nonsuch House (10 rooms, with option to rent whole house)** – Operated as a luxury accommodation offering, with guests dining in the on-site restaurant or opting for in-room dining services. The house can also be rented exclusively by large groups, who would then have access to the main kitchen for private catering.
- **Converted Outbuildings/Barns (Short-Let/Airbnb Model)** – Providing self-contained accommodation with small kitchens, allowing guests to be self-sufficient while also having the option to use the restaurant. These will be more affordable than staying in Nonsuch House, broadening the estate's appeal.
- **On-Site Amenities** – Including a yoga studio, artist's studio, and wellness facilities, ensuring the estate remains a desirable destination for a range of visitors.

3.2. This model aligns with the success of comparable rural estates such as Thyme in the Cotswolds, The Newt in Somerset, and Wilderness Reserve in Suffolk, all of which have demonstrated the financial sustainability of luxury heritage accommodation.



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3.3. The model also delivers a range of wider benefits:

- **Heritage Conservation** – The sustainable reuse of Nonsuch House ensures its restoration and ongoing maintenance.
- **Economic Growth** – The estate will generate employment, support local suppliers, and attract high-value tourism to the area.
- **Environmental and Landscape Enhancements** – The proposals incorporate rewilding and ecological improvements, reinforcing the estate's natural beauty.

4. Conclusion

4.1. After an extensive review of potential uses for Nonsuch Estate, we have come to the conclusion that high-end visitor accommodation presents the only financially viable model that aligns with the estate's historic character, respect for the local community and planning constraints.

4.2. Other options, including private residential use, commercial office space, educational functions, agricultural expansion, and livery, have been considered but found to be impractical due to financial limitations, planning restrictions, or unsustainable long-term prospects.

4.3. The chosen approach not only restores and preserves Nonsuch House but also contributes positively to the local economy, provides employment opportunities, and enhances the estate's ecological and cultural value.

4.4. The estate's transformation into a high-end hospitality destination secures its long-term sustainability while ensuring that it remains a cherished part of the local heritage and landscape. This proposal represents the best balance between financial viability, heritage conservation, and economic contribution, making it the most sustainable option for the future of Nonsuch Estate.