



# **Birtley House Corporate Events Strategy**

**Initial Findings Report October 2010**

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# Contents

<b>Page</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>6-10</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Initial Recommendations</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Appendix i</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Appendix ii</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Appendix iii</b>
<b>16-17</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Appendix iv</b>



## Executive Summary



The focus of this initial report is to outline a strategy that would increase revenue from events from £20,000 to £50,000+ for the Birtley House Group and Birtley Estates. Currently the focus is on weddings and the objective is to shift the type of event towards the corporate events market.

The aim is to ensure that that residents are in no way disturbed by the events and in some cases, such as the public events, are actively encouraged to take part.

This report sets out recommendations that should enable the boost in revenue that has been suggested.

The major change that we would recommend is to the layout of the current marquee site to reflect the increase in cost for the venue that is required to meet the financial target. The change in layout not only provides a more attractive option for potential clients but also suits any supplier working at the venue.

We also suggest that a tender process be instated in order to construct a list of accredited suppliers who would have sole permission to work at the venue. A commission would levied on these suppliers which would contribute to the revenue stream.

Further recommendations include redesigning the events brochure and website in order to make it more attractive to the corporate market and considering a summer package deal for corporate events linking in with the May sculpture exhibition.

There is a second phase that we would recommend to the estate development which would be the construction of an additional gravel track that would connect the marquee site with the top field which would enable this to be used as the car park for the public events.

Zenith Consultants would take on the role of event management at the site where required and would also conduct site visits.

At this stage we have made some estimates as to the costs of our recommendations.

We would also recommend that Zenith Consultants carry out further research with businesses in the area in order to pinpoint the needs of the possible clients.



## Introduction



The Birtley Group's main income is from providing high quality care and retirement property to elderly people. It is a family run business with over 75 years experience in this industry. Currently there are also ten events held each year which provides additional income to the group though the Birtley Estates part of the company.

The estate, which encompasses 48 acres of beautiful Surrey countryside, provides a variety of activities for the residents and the public alike including fishing, shooting, ornamental gardens and woodland. There are also two public events each year which are a very successful outdoor sculpture exhibition and the recent inaugural Surrey Wood Fair. A further concert event is planned.

The aim of this report is to outline a strategy that would allow the increase of revenue from received from events (excluding public events) from the current level of £20,000 to at least £50,000.

2012 will mark the 80th anniversary of Birtley House and the aim would be to achieve the recommendations laid out in this report in time for these celebrations.



## Objectives



The objectives regarding events at Birtley are the following:

- ➔ Grow events income from £20,000 to £50,000
- ➔ Shift focus from weddings to corporate events
- ➔ Produce three public events a year - (Sculpture Exhibition, Concert and Wood Fair)
- ➔ Ensure the residents don't feel excluded
- ➔ Strengthen ties with wider local community (effective business development with future residents)
- ➔ Strengthen ties with the business community

# Initial Recommendations

## ➔ Review/change site layout

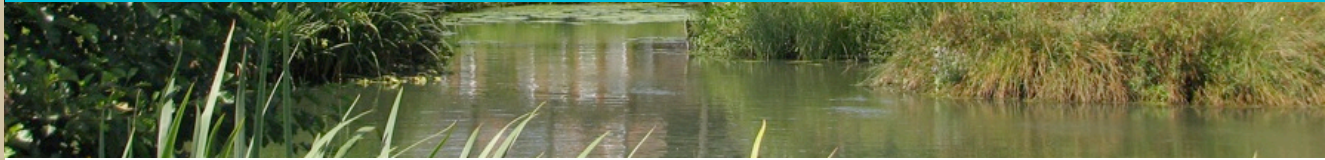
- Phase 1 construction (red cross hatching) would be a gravel track created behind the marquee to allow a catering van to park at the back of the service area and to turn via a newly created gravel turning circle.
- The loos would be closer to allow for a covered walkway between the marquee and the trailer.
- The electricity box would be moved adjacent to new WC trailer site
- Evergreen trees could be planted to hide trailer and electricity box
- A flower bed could be put in around the tree in direct line of site from the marquee and perhaps a sculpture and one flood light (that could be coloured for events with a gel)
- Phase 2 construction (white cross hatching) would be an additional gravel track leading up to the top field with vehicle passing points to allow better access for the public events.



(Larger version available see **appendix i**)



## Initial Recommendations



### ➔ **Tender Process**

- Companies would be invited to tender for the position of accredited supplier at Birtley House
- This would be for catering and marquee supply
- The aim would be to have three companies of each type to allow for sufficient choice with regards to price
- Commission would be levied at 10% of the total final invoice excluding VAT
- This process would be wholly facilitated and managed by Zenith Consultants

### ➔ **Raise cost of site**

- The site at Birtley is currently available for £2,000
- We would advocate this was raised to £3,950 based on a 4 day hire
- The extra revenue would be achieved from the commission from suppliers

### ➔ **Consider full events license for Birtley House**

- The costs for this would be an initial £635 along with an advert in the Surrey Advertiser costing £250
- The annual cost would be £350
- It would not be advertised that events were possible all year round but the limit would not be stated in the marketing material.
- While the current advertised “exclusivity” is undoubtedly an advantage the same goal would be achieved through careful brand management
- The ability to hold 12-15 events each year would greatly aid in exceeding the financial target and balance the investment needed in the infrastructure.
- The aim would always be to preserve a positive balance between the residents peace and the economic objectives of the strategy.



# Initial Recommendations

## ➔ Produce a new events brochure

- The current events brochure for Birtley available through the website is focused on weddings.
- A new brochure would be designed both for download and as a hard copy that would reflect the price bracket and new corporate identity of the venue

## ➔ Consider a redesign of the events website

- Although the current site preserves a coherent brand through each of Birtley's websites we would argue that the events side of the business could operate in its own unique brand
- It has been suggested that when enquiries are made it is of utmost importance that the residential side of the business is not highlighted
- The current navigation allows for one way traffic into the events website
- We would advocate a whole new site that would stand alone
- See **appendix ii** for two examples of the type of venue website that Birtley could adopt

## ➔ Membership of venue search websites

- Birtley is listed on the You Surrey Wedding website (<http://www.yoursurreywedding.co.uk/>)
- We suggest that the venue be listed instead on corporate sites such as CVNET and venuefinder.com
- Basic listing is free, additional benefits vary in cost
- See **appendix iii** for outlined costs



## Initial Recommendations

### ➔ Local Business

- Zenith Consultants would carry out focused research with companies in the area to build an accurate picture of the events market in and around Guildford.
- The aim would be to market the venue effectively and to generate interest regarding Birtley as a destination for corporate events.

### ➔ Promotional Events

- These would be focused towards the business community in the area but could also serve as business development for Birtley House and also for the public events
- An event could be run in conjunction with the sculpture exhibition to demonstrate the sort of event a company might have
- A marquee with one side open and perhaps a terrace or clear roof
- More and larger (e.g the Fruit from the exhibition in 2009) sculptures could be laid out on the front lawn giving guests a spectacular view across the lake
- It could also allow the guests to make early purchases of the exhibits and therefore be an extra draw to the event like the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts.

### ➔ Event Packages

- The focus would be on the May sculpture exhibition
- A marquee would remain in place over two weeks
- Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday would be sold as event packages to corporate clients
- The package would include the marquee, lighting, three course dinner or canapes depending on the type of event.
- This could also be adapted for Christmas as well
- See **appendix iv** for suggested costs



## Initial Recommendations

### ➔ **Selling drinks to clients for events**

- Another possible source of revenue would be to sell the drinks to the clients for their events
- This is something that is increasingly prevalent at venues in London (e.g. The Science Museum and The Royal Courts of Justice)
- It would be important to maintain realistic costs to avoid clients rejecting the venue on this basis and to encourage them to purchase the drinks on offer

### ➔ **Set up transport links with a local coach company**

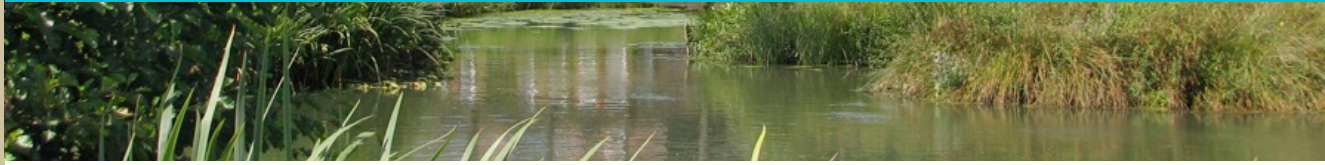
- Given that much of the corporate business would be sourced from within 10 miles of the venue we would encourage a link to be forged between a local coach company and Birtley
- We would also suggest that the costs for this could be absorbed by Birtley which would be another feature to attract business out to the site

### ➔ **Zenith Consultants to provide onsite event management**

- We would provide event management services for clients
- We would take the initial enquiry and conduct site visits



## Estimated Investment Costs



At this stage these costs are estimates and are subject to negotiation or in some cases further research.

### **Estate development PHASE 1 (Further research required)**

- ➔ Construction of new gravel trackway - £5,000 - £8,000
- ➔ Moving of loo facilities - £1,000
- ➔ Moving of electricity supply - £1,000
- ➔ Planting of trees and general aesthetics - £1,500

TOTAL - £8,500 - £11,500

### **Estate development PHASE 2 (Further research required)**

- ➔ Construction of new gravel trackway up to top field - £10,000 - £15,000

### **License Costs**

- ➔ Initial payment to Waverley Council - £635
- ➔ Cost for advert in Surrey Advertiser - £250
- ➔ Annual fee for license £350

### **Marketing Costs**

- ➔ Website development - £1,000 - £2,000
- ➔ Brochure printing - £500-£1,500
- ➔ Mailing costs - £300
- ➔ Promotional event - £5,000
- ➔ Market research £1,200
- ➔ Venue listings - £500

TOTAL - £8,500 - £10,500



## Conclusions

While the initial capital outlay, when compared to the financial target of £50K may seem relatively high, the subsequent long term benefits would outweigh this.

The additional work to the marquee site is required to ensure that the new price of the venue is reflected in terms of quality. A covered walkway to the loo facilities would be absolutely expected. Allowing better access for suppliers is also an attractive feature to those same suppliers thus making them more inclined to recommend the venue to their clients.

With plans such as the visitors centre and events in 2012 needing a site that can manage a higher capacity of visitors, not to mention the possible growth of events such as the Wood Fair and the already successful May sculpture exhibition, it seems likely that better access will be required.

The ability to use the back road for public events is limited since this is a public right of way and accessed by neighbours. Therefore the most obvious choice would be to allow some sort of access through the estate allowing vehicles to park in the field to the south west of the main house.

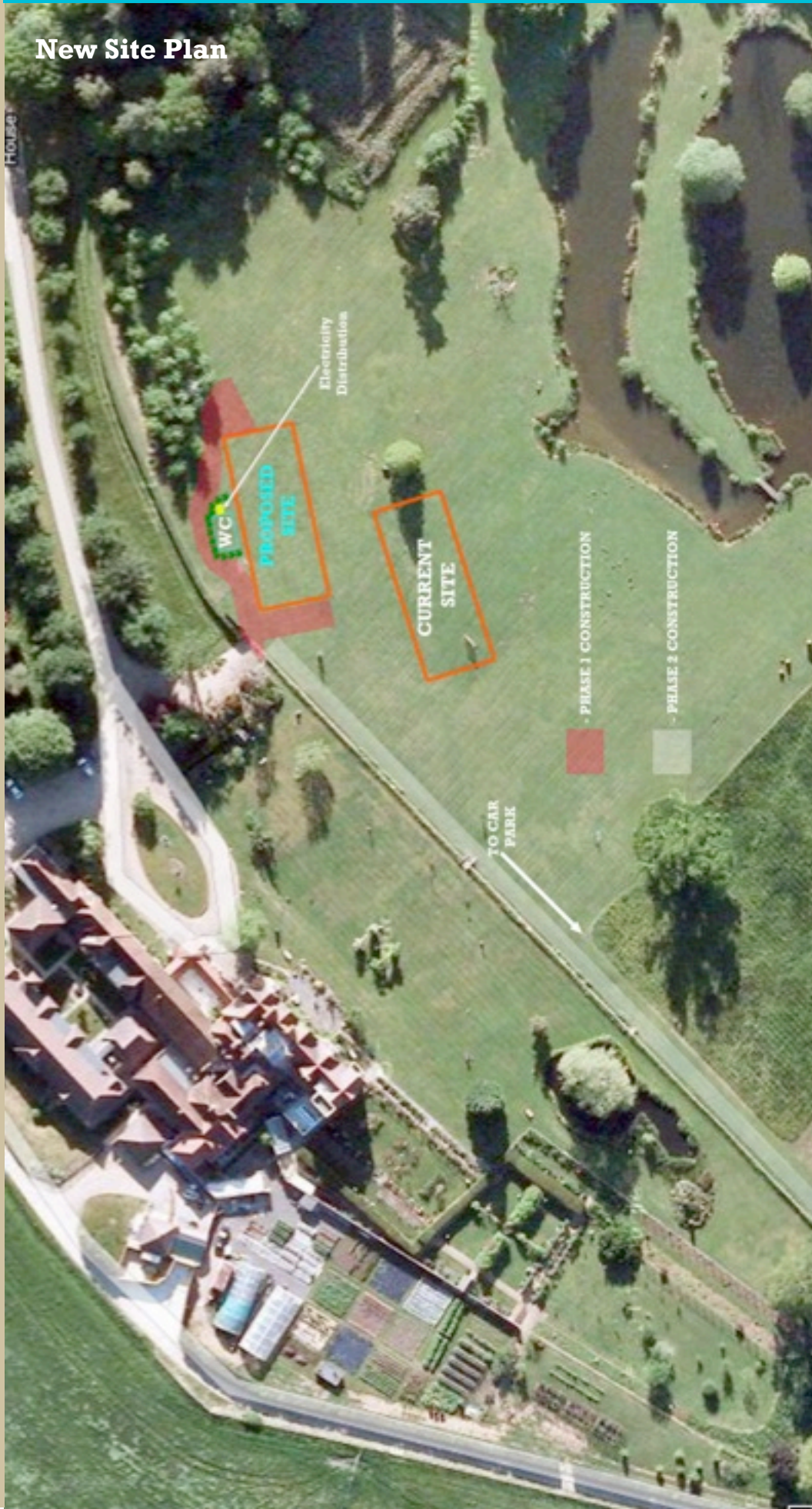
These modifications will allow Birtley to become a focus for the local community in terms of successful and enjoyable public events as well as a destination for Guildford's top business residents looking for stylish and peaceful surroundings to entertain their guests.

Changes to the look and feel of the marketing will enable the venue to be best represented when approaching corporate clients and will reflect the relatively high price. Although a higher price than has been set out here (£5K) has been discussed it was felt that given local competition set at a lower level (e.g. Lowsley House) it would be sensible not to price Birtley out of the market.

It is our belief that by increasing the number of corporate events to perhaps 15 a year with a full license that the income could be in the region of £60K - £70K and possibly more depending on the public events and potential drinks sales.

# Appendix i

## New Site Plan



# Appendix ii

## Blenheim Palace Website



## Painshill Park Website (The Concerto Group)



# Appendix iii

## Example of package deal from top venue website

Premier Package: Online Only

Entry highlighted and prioritised in the search results as well as:

- 4 colour photographs and 1 logo
- Venue description (50 words)
- Active email address
- Hotlinked web address
- Venue name and address
- Telephone and fax number
- Event contacts
- Number of meeting rooms
- Number of bedrooms
- Maximum meeting room capacity
- Maximum catering capacity
- Meeting room sizes and capacities, lighting, power, access
- Association membership
- Daily & 24 delegate rates, plus meeting room rates
- Quality ratings
- Bedroom types and facilities
- Conference equipment
- Sports & leisure facilities

COST - £999

# Appendix iv

## Event Package (May Sculpture Exhibition Dinner)

### Concept

Guests arrive via coach from a central Guildford location, perhaps their office, and are dropped off at the front of the house at approximately 6.30pm. They are guided through to the beautiful ornamental gardens surrounded by the sculptures for a 45 minute champagne and canapé reception (weather permitting). The curator and perhaps one or two of the artists would be ready to take guests on a small tour of some of the exhibits.

At 7.15pm dinner is announced and they are led through the gardens and across the front lawn to the marquee.

Guests will be guided into a stunning clearspan marquee uplit in the colour of their choice, with a clear PVC roof covering 10m of the structure. The view across the lake will be accentuated by the tree and adjacent sculpture flood lit in the corporate colour of the company.

They will enjoy a stunning three course dinner by top local caterers while the sun sets (approximately 8.40pm) across the beautiful Birtley estate.

At 10.30pm coaches (optional) will arrive to take the guests back to a central point - perhaps Guildford station.

### Costs

#### General Costs

Marquee*	Complete with lighting/PVC/Floor	£7,033
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#### \*Based on a two week hire

#### Per Event (Dinner)

Marquee	Per head cost @ £4.69 (based on 6 nights)	£704
Catering	Based on 150 (£70 per head)	£10,500
Drinks	Unlimited consumption (£15 per head)	£2,250
Transport	Based on 150	£795

(COST) TOTAL £94.99 per person

# Appendix iv

## Event Package (May Sculpture Exhibition Reception)

### Concept

Guests arrive via coach from a central Guildford location, perhaps their office, and are dropped off at the marquee at approximately 6.30pm. They enjoy a champagne and canapé reception in the marquee looking out over the lake. Guests are invited in small groups for a short guided tour of some of the exhibits or they may go off unguided.

The reception finishes at 8.30pm with the coaches arriving at 9pm.

### Per Event (Reception)

Marquee		£1,173
Catering	Based on 250 (£25 per head)	£6,250
Drinks	Unlimited consumption (£12 per head)	£3,000
Transport	Based on 250	£1,325

(COST) TOTAL £46.99 per person

Birtley (and Zenith Consultants) would sell these packages for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to corporate clients over a two week period. The marquee could also be used by Birtley for its own promotional evening and the caterers could be asked to do the event at cost.

The packages, to the client would cost:

Dinner £110 (+VAT) per person  
Reception £55 (+VAT) per person

There would be a margin on the per head cost as well as a margin on the drinks sales. The packages could be reduced in the promotional material by taking out certain elements, as is common practice in most events package deals.

The catering company that has been quoted here is Cottage Caterers. The prices could also be reduced by limiting the menu choices and selecting simple but delicious seasonal produce. Birtley's own produce could be used as well, if possible, to add another interesting element to the evening.