

Re Change Request 2: Change Report, Sept 2025 (PINS Ref: EN010147):

In response to feedback from Historic England and other Interested Parties, the Applicant has removed solar installation area, fence, maintenance roads and gates from field numbers 2.1, 2.2, 2.5 and 2.20-2.26 to the east of Bladon to protect the visual setting of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (2.4 Change 1). However they propose to retain the land within the Order Limits in order to create a 'Community Food Growing Area'.

I have the following questions about this:

1. In what sense would it be a 'community' food growing area? Having initially mentioned the idea of providing allotments for local residents, the Applicant's latest proposal is that the land will not be for the use of the local community. Neither of the food growers mentioned by the Applicant (OxFarmtoFork and Cherwell Collective) are local to Bladon. The food they would produce would not be for the local community. The local community has not even been consulted on the location or any other aspects of the plans for the 'community food growing area' except in the vaguest of terms, as I detailed in my submission for Deadline 5, Submission ID: 37611.
2. OxFarmtoFork is a commercial food grower, producing food that it sells to institutional buyers. The fields earmarked for the 'Community Food Growing Area' are already a commercial food growing area. The area is being productively farmed, as it has for generations, forming part of the traditional agricultural setting of Blenheim Palace described in the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Management Plan, 2017. Why would a change from the existing form of commercial food production to a new form of commercial food production be considered a planning benefit?
3. The Applicant's reason for removing solar infrastructure from these particular fields is to protect the setting of Blenheim Palace. Can the Applicant guarantee that commercial food production by OxFarmtoFork and the 'food forests' proposed by Cherwell Collective would not harm the setting of Blenheim Palace through an accumulation of polytunnels, sheds and storage facilities, access roads, security fences etc.?