



Babur's Garden Rehabilitation Framework

Kabul, Afghanistan

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BAGH-E BABUR REHABILITATION FRAMEWORK

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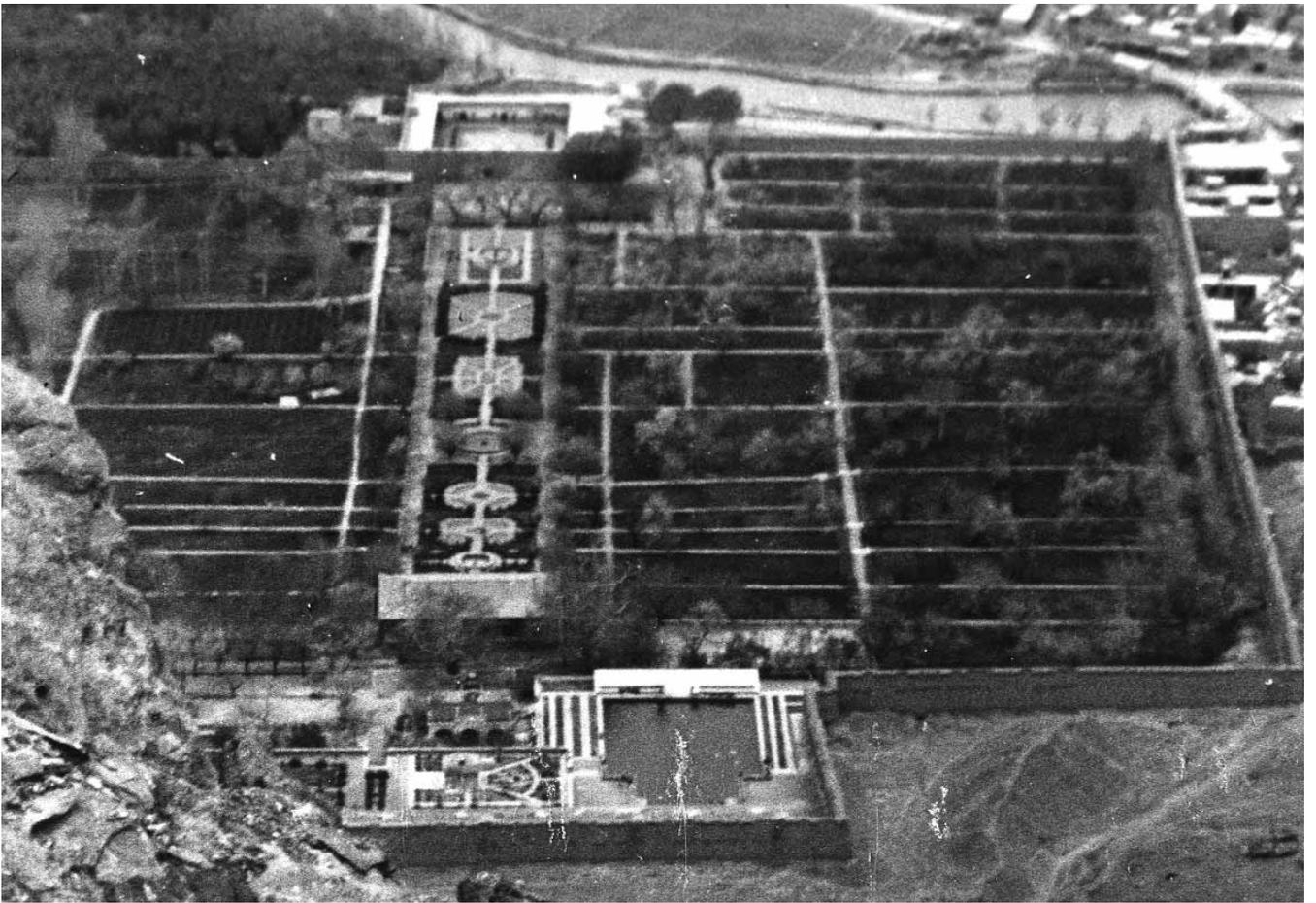
1. THE HISTORY OF BAGHE BABUR AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO KABUL

The site of Baghe Babur is thought to be that of the "paradise garden" that Babur, founder of the Mughal empire, gave instructions for in 1528 AD (935 AH). It is one of several gardens that Babur had laid out for recreation and pleasure during his life, while choosing this site as his last resting-place. Initially buried in Agra, Babur's body was laid to rest in the 1540s in the garden that has since borne his name. The site continued to have significance for Mughal rulers, and during a visit to the garden in 1607 AD (1016 AH) Jehangir gave instructions that all gardens in Kabul be surrounded by walls, that a prayer platform be laid in front of Babur's grave, and an inscribed headstone placed at its head. In 1638 (1047 AH) the Emperor Shahjahan erected a marble screen around the group of tombs, and built a mosque on the terrace below, with the following dedication "only this mosque of beauty, this temple of nobility, constructed for the prayer of saints and the epiphany of cherubs, was fit to stand in so venerable a sanctuary as this highway of archangels, this theatre of heaven, the light garden of the godforgiven angel king whose rest is in the garden of heaven, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur the Conqueror". Accounts from that time describe a channel of water running from below the mosque along the line of an avenue, with small reservoirs at each terrace, and larger pools at intervals. In true Mughal tradition, this gave the site the character of a mausoleum.

Visitors to the site during the 19th century, including Masson, Vigne, Atkinson and Burke, recorded that the site had become neglected, and fallen into disrepair. An earthquake in 1842 damaged the garden walls and mosque. By the 1880s, however, Amir Abdurahman Khan embarked on a programme of development that included the construction of a central Pavilion and a residence, now known as the Queen's Palace, for his wife Bibi Halima. Together with alterations to the landscaping, this work was influenced more by European fashion than the original Mughal inspiration for the site. The reign of Nadir Shah (1930-33) saw the garden transformed into a public recreation area, with the construction of a large water reservoir, and pools and fountains as the focus for a flower garden down the central axis of the site. During the 1980s, a modern swimming pool and greenhouse were built close to the pavilion, and a tarred access road added.

Given its location close to the frontlines between factions who occupied Kabul in 1992, the garden became a "no-mans land" for several years. Both the pavilion and Queen's Palace were destroyed by fire as a result of the fighting, and the mosque was damaged. Irrigation was disrupted when the water pumps were looted from the garden wells and, as a result, most trees died. Although by this time littered with mines and unexploded ordnance, the garden became a source of firewood for the population still living in the area. From 1996, UNCHS Habitat carried out some preliminary rehabilitation work and re-planting on the site.

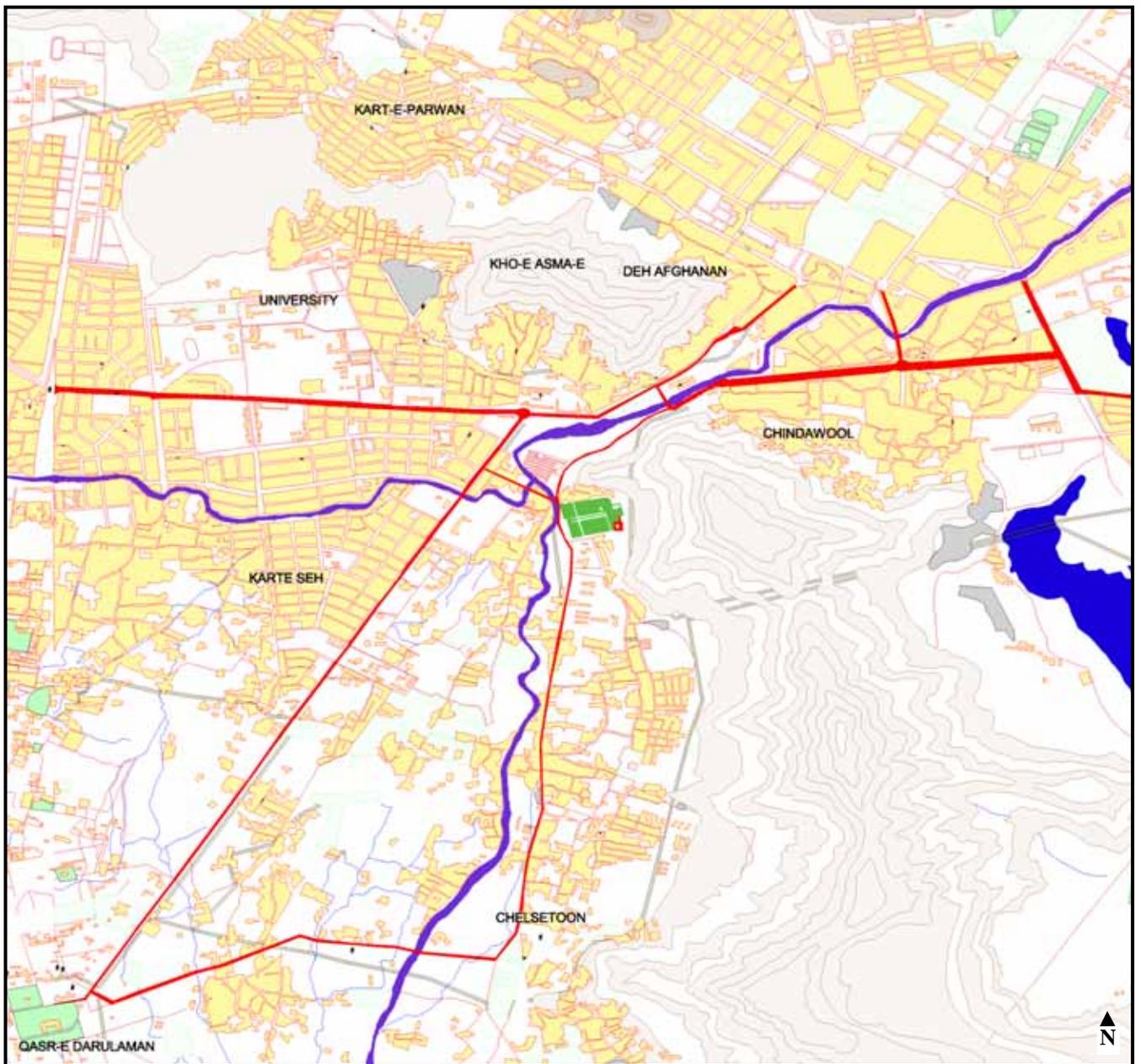
In a context where much of the urban built heritage has been lost, Baghe Babur not only represents a site of major historic significance, but is also the largest walled public enclosure in Kabul, providing the urban population with a space for picnics, walking and swimming. Although originally conceived of in relation to the open plain to the southwest, where Babur and his entourage hunted, the garden is now almost entirely surrounded by residential and other development, for which it provides an important focus. Given the extent of war-related damage to homes and infrastructure, it is vital that an appropriate balance be found between historic conservation in the garden itself and improvements in the living conditions of residents of the wider neighbourhood.



The view from the hillside during the 1940's to the west clearly shows the relation between the garden and river (top) as well as the scale and extent of planting at that time. It also shows the configuration of the caravanserai area, prior to its destruction.



This view from the upper terrace of the garden during the 1870's shows the state of Babur's (in the middle ground) and other adjacent graves at this time, while providing useful clues about fragments of carved marble that have been found recently on the site. The photo also gives some idea of the scale of the planting, and the original rural setting of the garden.



Baghe Babur is not only a site of major historical significance to Kabul, but represents the largest public walled enclosure in the city, providing the urban population with vital recreational space. Marked in green on the map above, the garden can be seen in relation to other key landmarks in Kabul, including the old city (Chindawol) and other historic locations (Chilsitun and Darulaman), as well as the major residential area to the north.



Aerial view of Baghe Babur

Taken prior to the rehabilitation works, this shows the extent of desolation in the garden. The principal structures, the configuration of terraces, the perimeter walling and the settlement adjacent to the site are also visible.

2. REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED IN 2002/3

Since the spring of 2002, a process of research and documentation has helped to define an approach towards the rehabilitation of the garden and its environs, while allowing for the identification of priorities for immediate action. This has provided a framework for an initial range of activities undertaken during 2002/3 by the AKTC/H CSP team, in close collaboration with the Department of Historic Monuments and Institute of Archaeology of the Ministry of Information and Culture, and Kabul Municipality, as follows:

Landscaping

A tree nursery was established on the site in autumn 2002, in collaboration with the Greenery department of Kabul Municipality, with the aim of providing a source for appropriate saplings for the re-planting programme. This is in acknowledgement of the nature of the terraced site, that relates more to the fruit orchard enclosures of Central Asia, with their abundance of water and shade, than the geometric tradition of Indian examples. During the spring of 2003, some 200 fruit and other trees, mainly from commercial sources identified by an AKTC consultant horticulturalist, were planted on the upper terraces. This exercise also provided an opportunity to collect vital information on possible rural sources of fruits and other trees. Building upon this initial work, and a site assessment during August 2003, a senior landscape consultant has been engaged to prepare a comprehensive landscape plan for the garden (see attached outline drawings), including paths and access ways. The plan will aim to preserve traces or reconstruct key elements of the Mughal landscaping, while taking into account subsequent developments, which have transformed the site into an important focus for public recreation. In order to sustain the flora of the garden, remedial work has been undertaken on the existing system of surface irrigation channels, which will be upgraded as part of the overall landscape plan.

Excavations and surveys

A programme of selective excavations was initiated in autumn 2002 by members of the German Archaeological Institute, working in close collaboration with the Institute of Archaeology in Kabul. These investigations have focused on the vestiges of the original irrigation system along the central axis of the garden, the remains of Babur's tomb enclosure, and the caravanserai area. Together with a topographical survey prepared in 2002, the outcome of the excavations will guide reinstatement of a more authentic irrigation network, and the respective structures. A detailed survey was undertaken of the surviving structure of the Queen's Palace, as a basis for assessment of its feasibility for possible re-use.

Site clearance

In order for rehabilitation activities to proceed, it has been necessary to seek the assistance of mine action agencies to collect and dispose of remaining unexploded ordnance found on the site. In addition, significant quantities of rubble and metal waste have been collected, under the supervision of the Institute of Archaeology, and disposed of.

Remedial works to the Shahjehani mosque and Babur's tomb

Restoration work on the mosque, which was initiated during the summer of 2003, has included removal of reinforced concrete from the roof, lifting and documentation of marble paving from the surrounds, and initial repairs to damaged marble elements on the facades and supports to the roof. A temporary structure has been erected to enable conservation work on the exposed roof surface to continue through the winter. Excavations in the vicinity of the tomb revealed evidence of the original tomb platform and other structures, including graves. Based on these finds and other documentation, the level of the 14th terrace



Taken from the adjoining hillside in the 1970's, this image shows the state of the extensive complex of buildings related to the Queen's Palace and the upper terraces of the garden at that time. This provides an indication of the recent residential developments surrounding the walled perimeter of the garden. The extent and scale of the planting that existed close to Babur's grave, the Shah Jehani mosque and the Pavilion is also of significance, and will be taken into account in the proposed landscape plan.

The lower image shows a panoramic view of the garden in mid-2003, from a similar viewpoint as the upper image. This allows for a comparison with the earlier state of the upper terraces, showing the extent of devastation of both structures and trees as a result of the conflict. By the summer of 2003, the impact of the re-planting that had taken place in lower parts of the garden are clearly visible. Also visible in the foreground are the massive earth walls that have been repaired and rebuilt in the past 2 years.





Work continues on repairs to damaged marble elements on the Shah Jehani mosque.



Restoration has involved the removal of reinforced concrete from the mosque roof.

has been lowered on its southern end to a level closer to the original, while the modern roof structure over the grave itself has been removed. Marble elements from the various tomb enclosures revealed during recent removal of paving adjacent to the mosque, have been documented and stored, pending their possible re-use in the rehabilitated structures.

Rehabilitation of perimeter walling

A programme of labour-intensive repairs was initiated in spring of 2002, since when the eastern and northern ranges of earth perimeter walling have been rehabilitated, with funding from the government of Germany. Work continues on the rehabilitation of the southern range of walling. Investigations in the area of the caravanserai have revealed original footings, which will form the basis for its rehabilitation as a visitor's complex, incorporating a new lower garden entrance.

Operational planning

Preliminary consultations have taken place with representatives of Kabul Municipality and the Ministry of Information & Culture regarding the formulation of an operational plan for the management of the rehabilitated garden as a public facility. This includes options for the adaptive re-use for the Pavilion and Queen's Palace, as well as the possible re-location of the modern swimming pool within or outside of the garden.

Research and documentation

Efforts continue to identify and copy documentation related to the history of the garden, in order to ensure an appropriate degree of accuracy in the rehabilitation work. Building on the work undertaken by IsMEO during the 1960s, images and written material have been sourced from Biblioteca Afghanica (Switzerland), the British Library, British Museum, Royal Military Museum (UK) and the National Archives in Kabul. Additional searches are under way for material from, among other places, the Archaeological Survey of India.





The tree nursery established on the site during spring of 2003 will be the source of some of the stock for future planting. These will supplement fruit, planes and other trees that continue to be acquired from sources identified through extensive field-work outside of the city.



Excavations in the vicinity of Babur's grave and the adjacent terrace have revealed evidence of the original platform and other structures, that have been carefully documented, and will form the basis for a comprehensive reconstruction of the area during 2004.

3. REHABILITATION STRATEGY AND COMPONENTS

The overall goal of the AKTC/HCSF programme in Baghe Babur is to support the protection and development of an important historic site, in order to contribute to the preservation of Afghanistan's surviving cultural heritage, and to ensure that public access to the garden is enhanced in an appropriate manner.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

Within this framework, the objectives of the rehabilitation programme are:

- To rehabilitate the garden as a major green public space, with due reference to its historical origins.
- To safeguard and restore of key historic structures and elements within the garden.
- Ensure that the upgrading and maintenance of the site can be sustained, through development of an operational plan to guide and manage the development and maintenance of the garden and its immediate environment.
- To develop an indigenous capacity to plan and manage conservation activities.

KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS

In order to achieve the goal and objectives above, the key project components are:

a) Re-building of the perimeter walls

The massive earth walls around the perimeter of the site provide both a practical and symbolic enclosure, in the tradition of the walled orchards of the region. The southern and western ranges of walling will be repaired or replaced, using traditional labour-intensive pakhsa techniques, as well as associated vehicular and pedestrian gates.

b) Differentiated landscaping scheme

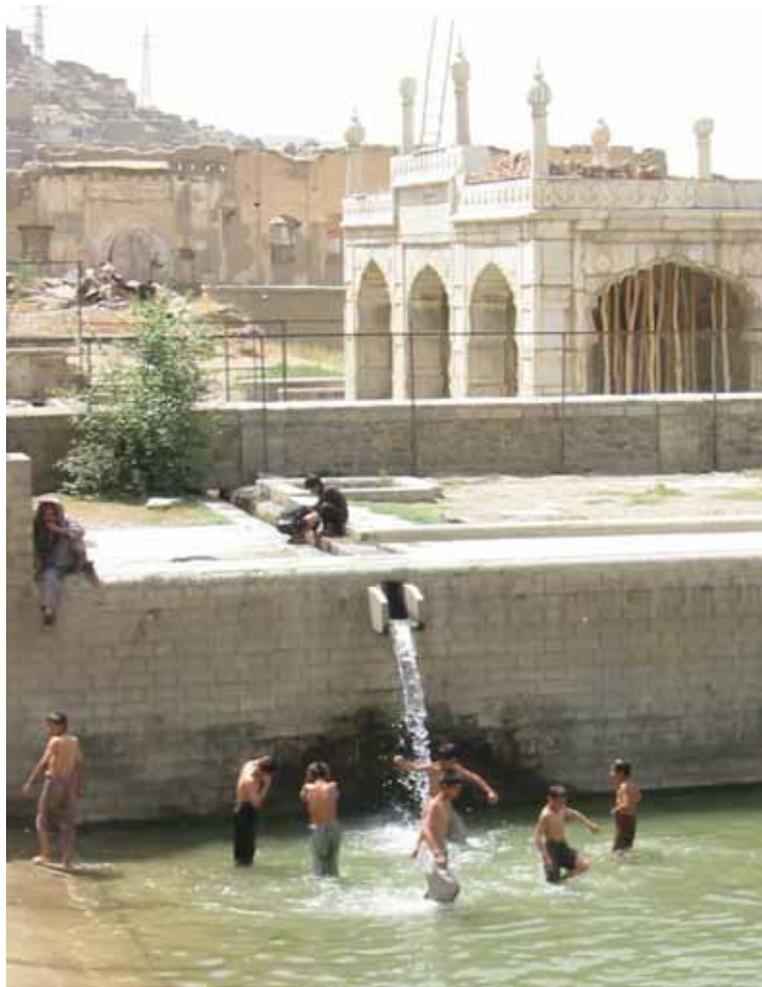
The restoration of the historic character of the landscape lies at the centre of the proposed rehabilitation programme. Drawing on historical documentation and photographs, as well as evidence from recent archaeological excavations, key elements in the most historically-significant areas of the garden will be restored, while the wider landscape will be upgraded and re-planted in a manner that responds to more contemporary use. The preliminary landscape plan, formulated by international consultants, foresees four principal landscape zones;

- i. the area of the upper terraces, restored in a manner that responds to the more contemplative and ceremonial significance of Babur's grave, the adjacent mosque and the Queen's Palace.
- ii. the central axis, which represents the main circulation route through the garden, at whose centre water would flow through a series of surface channels and pools, based on archaeological finds in the area.
- iii. extensive areas of large shade trees bordering orchards of fruits trees, in the tradition or gardens of this era.
- iv. public spaces, associated with the upper vehicular and lower pedestrian entrances to the garden.

In order to realize these zones, a series of phased activities, covering re-planting, irrigation and access improvements, clearance of accumulated waste and re-grading of terrace levels will be undertaken, with due consideration of the likely environmental impact, where appropriate.

c) Re-location of public swimming-pool

While the existing swimming-pool serves an important recreational purpose, this intrudes upon a space that has customarily been used by family groups. The re-location of this popular facility outside of the garden would significantly reduce pressure on the landscape, while enhancing the environment of the garden as a whole. An appropriate area of land has been secured to the west of the site for the development



In addition to its historic significance, the garden continues to be used for recreational purposes.



Following repairs to the Pavilion (by DHSA) the building will be commissioned early in 2004.

of a new complex (including pool, plant, changing rooms, toilets, recreation spaces and bike storage/parking) for which technical specifications will be prepared and tenders sought. Once the existing pool has been demolished, the area would be re-incorporated into the landscape. See also section 5 below.

d) Conservation of the Shahjahani mosque

Apart from its historic importance, the mosque is the focus for both contemplation and devotion for visitors to the garden. Restoration of the war-damaged structure will entail replacement of key marble elements and re-facing, using traditional techniques. An important aspect of this work will be the revitalization of traditional skills, as well as awareness-raising about the importance of appropriate conservation techniques. Paved prayer areas adjacent to the mosque will also be restored.

e) Restoration of Babur's grave enclosure

Although much altered by later developments, the grave of Babur continues to be the historic focus of the garden. Based on extensive research, the area around the grave will be restored, and the adjacent terrace re-levelled and re-planted in a manner approximating its original character. This will entail:

- i. changes to the levels of the terrace to restore the relationship between the grave and the surrounding area, and associated landscaping.
- ii. reconstruction of a 4 metre square marble enclosure around the grave, based on finds of fragments of the original structure on site, and archival records.
- iii. Restoration of a 17 metre square brick arcaded enclosure surrounding the grave platform, with associated stairs.

f) Commission pavilion for public use

There is an opportunity to return the recently-rehabilitated Pavilion to appropriate public use, which also has the potential to generate revenue for the upkeep of the garden. It is envisaged that an operational agreement will be negotiated with Kabul Municipality to ensure its use for appropriate functions. Based on the terms of this agreement, rehabilitation and servicing/equipping of the building will be completed to appropriate standards.

g) Re-building of the caravanserai area

Historical records suggest that the caravanserai at the base of the garden once served an important semi-public function. The reconstruction of this complex and the adjacent hammam, along the original configuration of walls revealed during archaeological excavation, provides an opportunity to rationalize the public entrance to the garden, and house a visitor's centre and appropriate commercial activity.

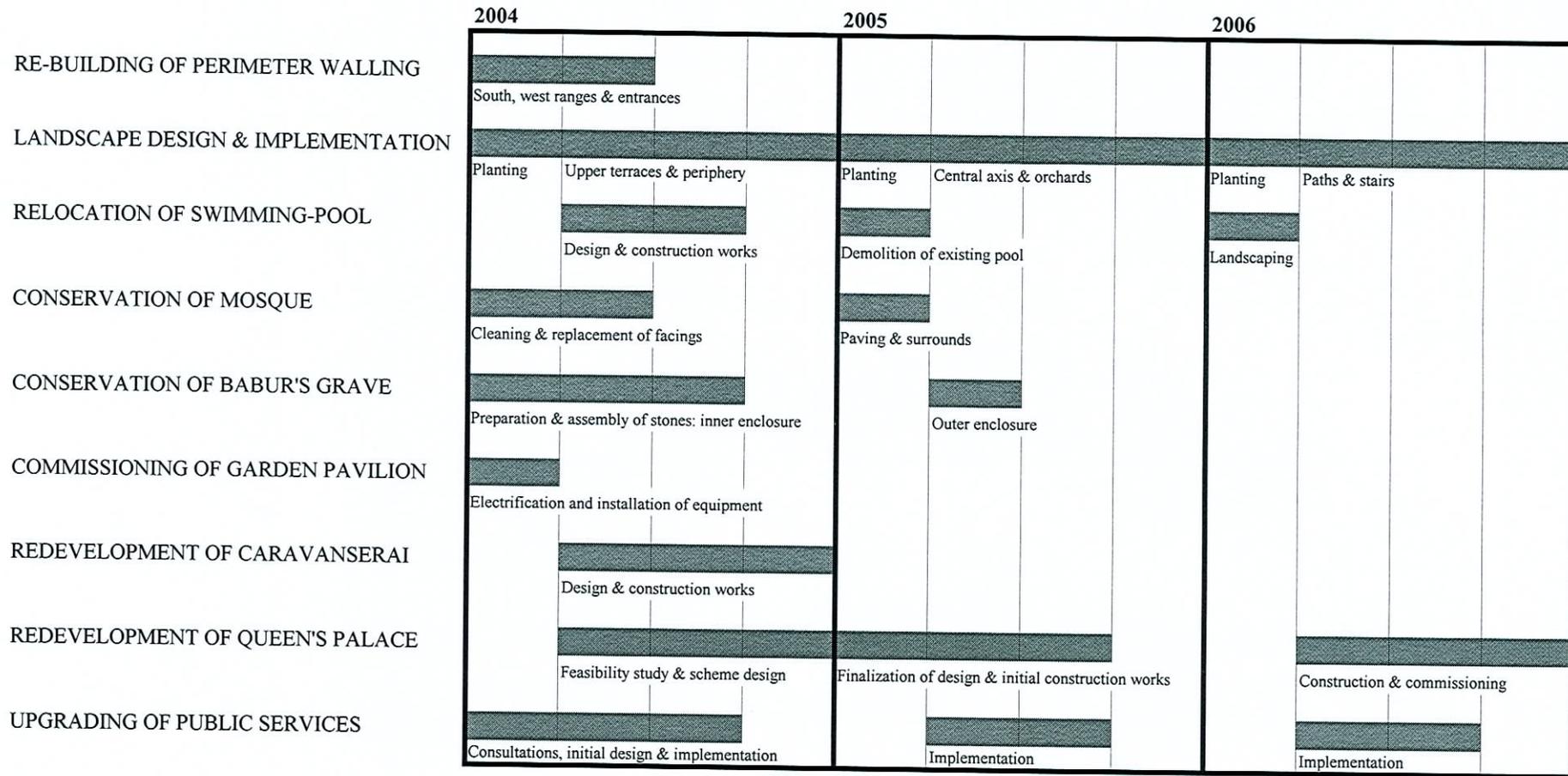
h) Re-use planning for the Queen's Palace

A schematic architectural and functional re-use study has been prepared (see section 6 below) as a basis for subsequent financial feasibility study, which will inform the final design process. Parallel negotiations will be held with owners and investors as to developing appropriate operational arrangements for the rehabilitation complex.

i) Upgrading public services in the neighbourhood

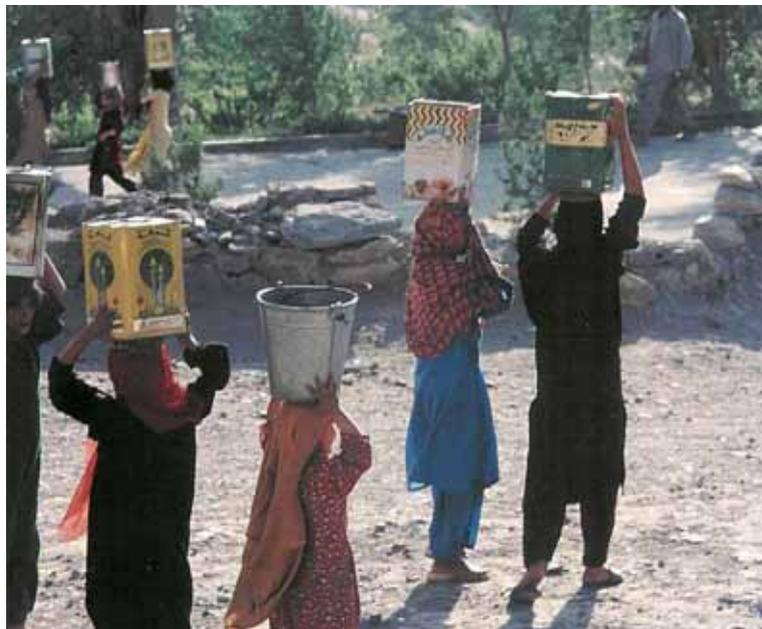
Improvements to the living conditions of the communities who inhabit the areas surrounding the garden are crucial to the overall rehabilitation programme. Access to basic services will therefore be improved through a programme of support for household water supply, sanitation, drainage and access improvements, as well as flood protection in adjoining residential areas.

4. BAGHE BABUR: PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE 2004-6





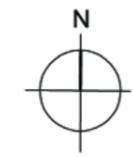
A range of informal commercial activities take place in the summer on the site.



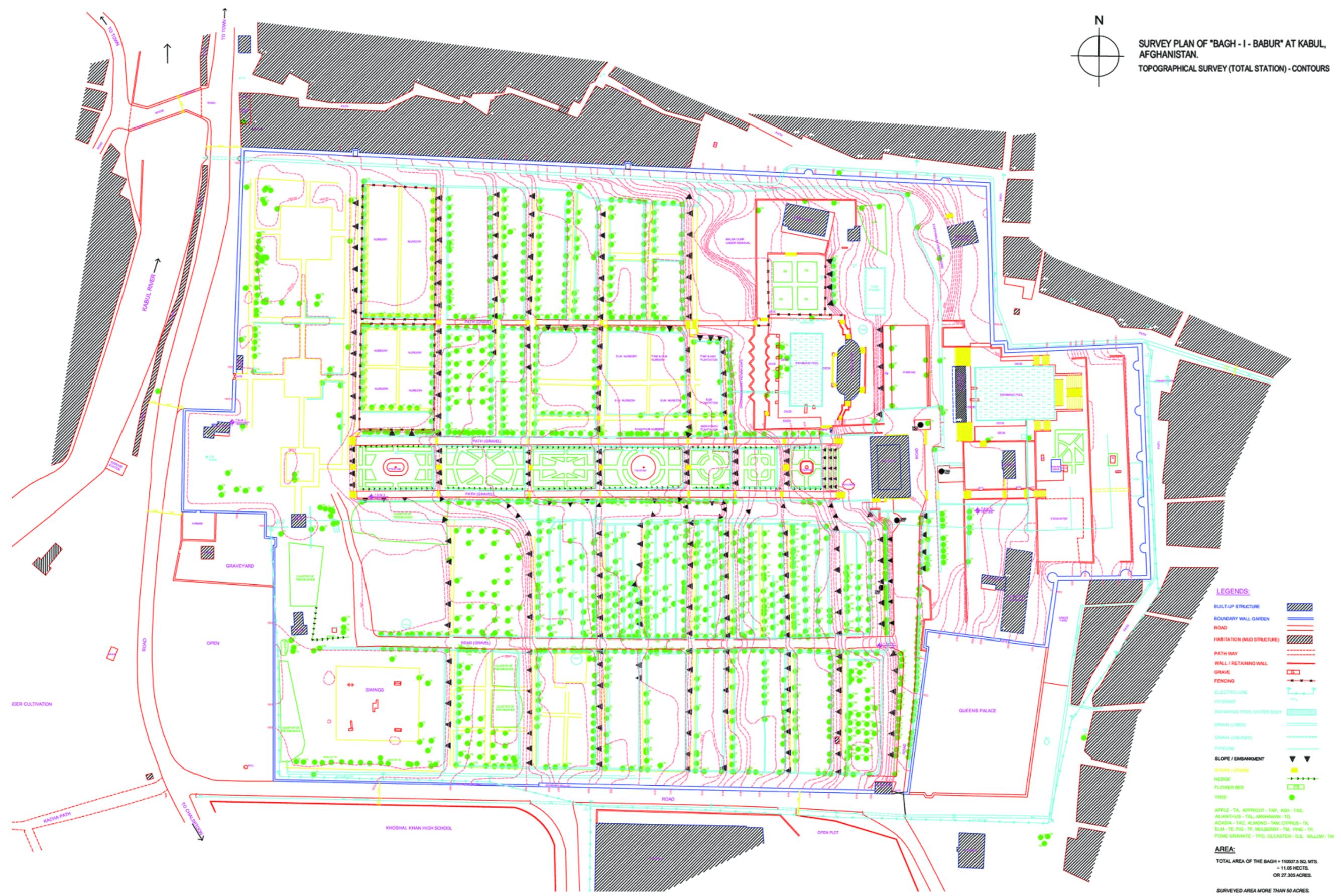
The community living adjacent to Bagh-e Babur rely on it for their water supply.



The garden continues to provide a focus for social activity and celebrations.



SURVEY PLAN OF "BAGH - I - BABUR" AT KABUL, AFGHANISTAN.
TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY (TOTAL STATION) - CONTOURS



LEGENDS:

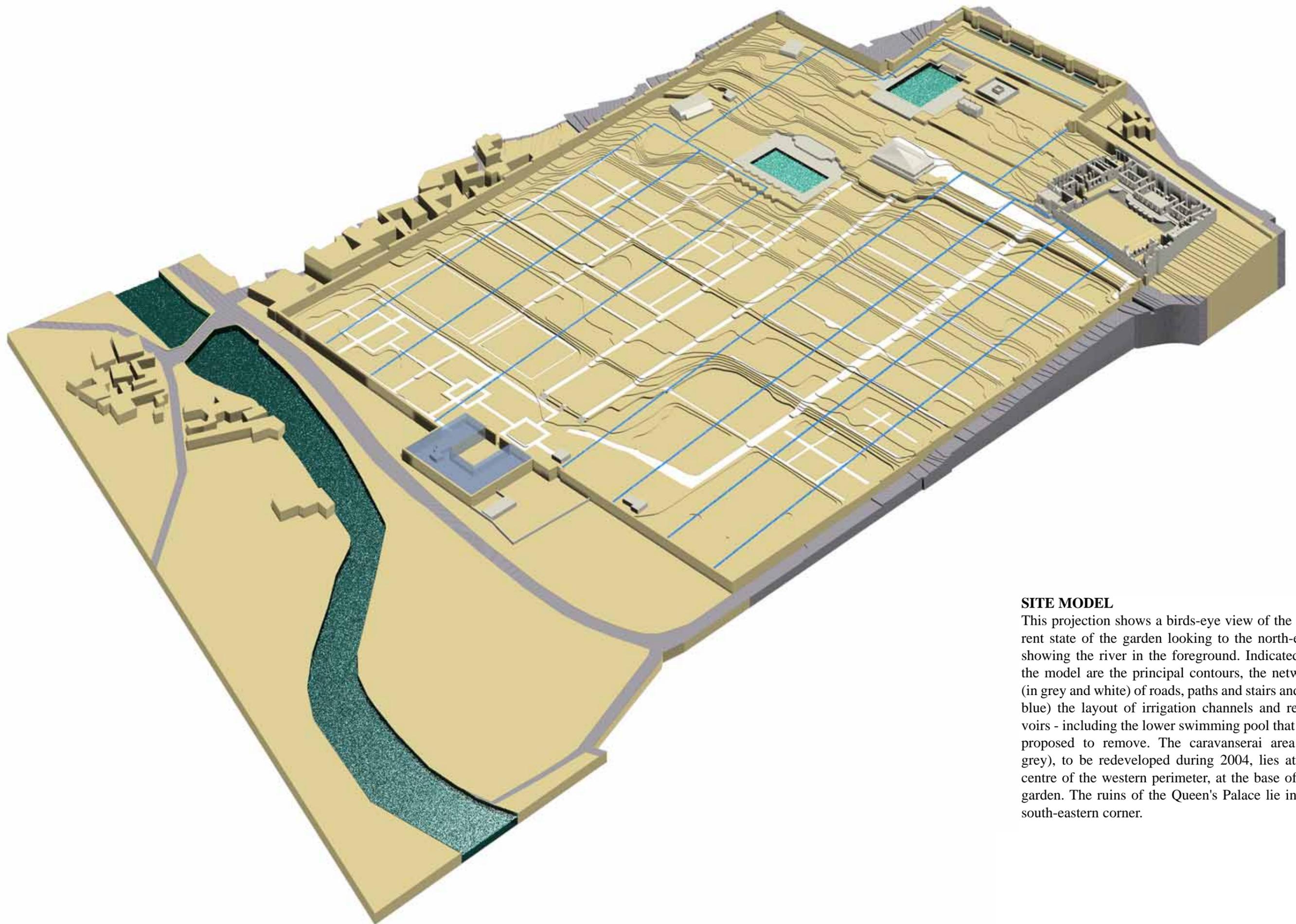
- BUILT-UP STRUCTURE
 - BOUNDARY WALL GARDEN
 - ROAD
 - HABITATION (MUD STRUCTURE)
 - PATH WAY
 - WALL / RETAINING WALL
 - GRABE
 - FENCING
 - ELECTRIC LINE
 - HYDRANT
 - SWIMMING POOL/WATER BODY
 - DRAIN (LINED)
 - DRAIN (UNLINED)
 - PIPELINE
 - SLOPE / EMBANKMENT
 - STEPS / STAIRS
 - HEDGE
 - FLOWER BED
 - TREE
- APPLE - TA, APRICOT - TAP, ASH - TAS, ALANTHUS - TAL, JARDHAWAN - TO, ACASIA - TAC, ALMOND - TAM, CYPRIUS - TC, ELM - TE, FIG - TF, MULBERRY - TM, PINE - TP, POME GRANATE - TPO, OLEASTER - TOS, WILLOW - TW

AREA:

TOTAL AREA OF THE BAGH = 110207.5 SQ. MTS.
= 11.05 HECTS.
OR 27.305 ACRES.

NOTES:

1. - LEVELS ARE WITH REFERENCE TO M.S.L. BENCHMARK VALUE, AS AVAILABLE AT SITE.
2. - LEVELS ARE TAKEN AT 10.0M GRID OR CLOSER WHEREVER REQUIRED.
3. - CONTOURS PLOTTED AT 0.5M INTERVALS.
4. - PATH/TERRACE LINES SHOWN ARE AS PER THE IMPRESSIONS AVAILABLE & PICKED FROM SITE.
5. - ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN MTS.



SITE MODEL

This projection shows a birds-eye view of the current state of the garden looking to the north-east, showing the river in the foreground. Indicated on the model are the principal contours, the network (in grey and white) of roads, paths and stairs and (in blue) the layout of irrigation channels and reservoirs - including the lower swimming pool that it is proposed to remove. The caravanserai area (in grey), to be redeveloped during 2004, lies at the centre of the western perimeter, at the base of the garden. The ruins of the Queen's Palace lie in the south-eastern corner.

Landscape Concept



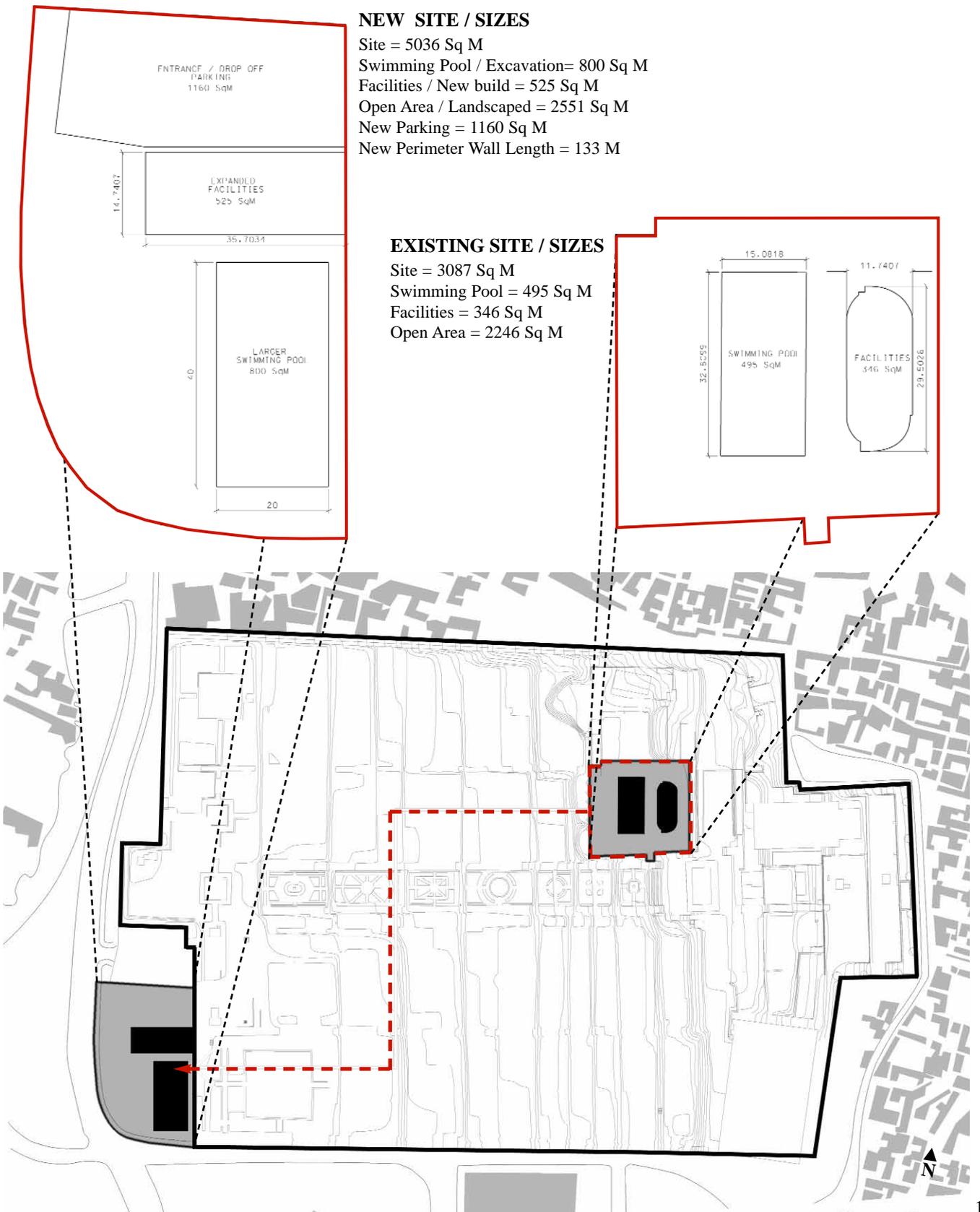
LEGEND

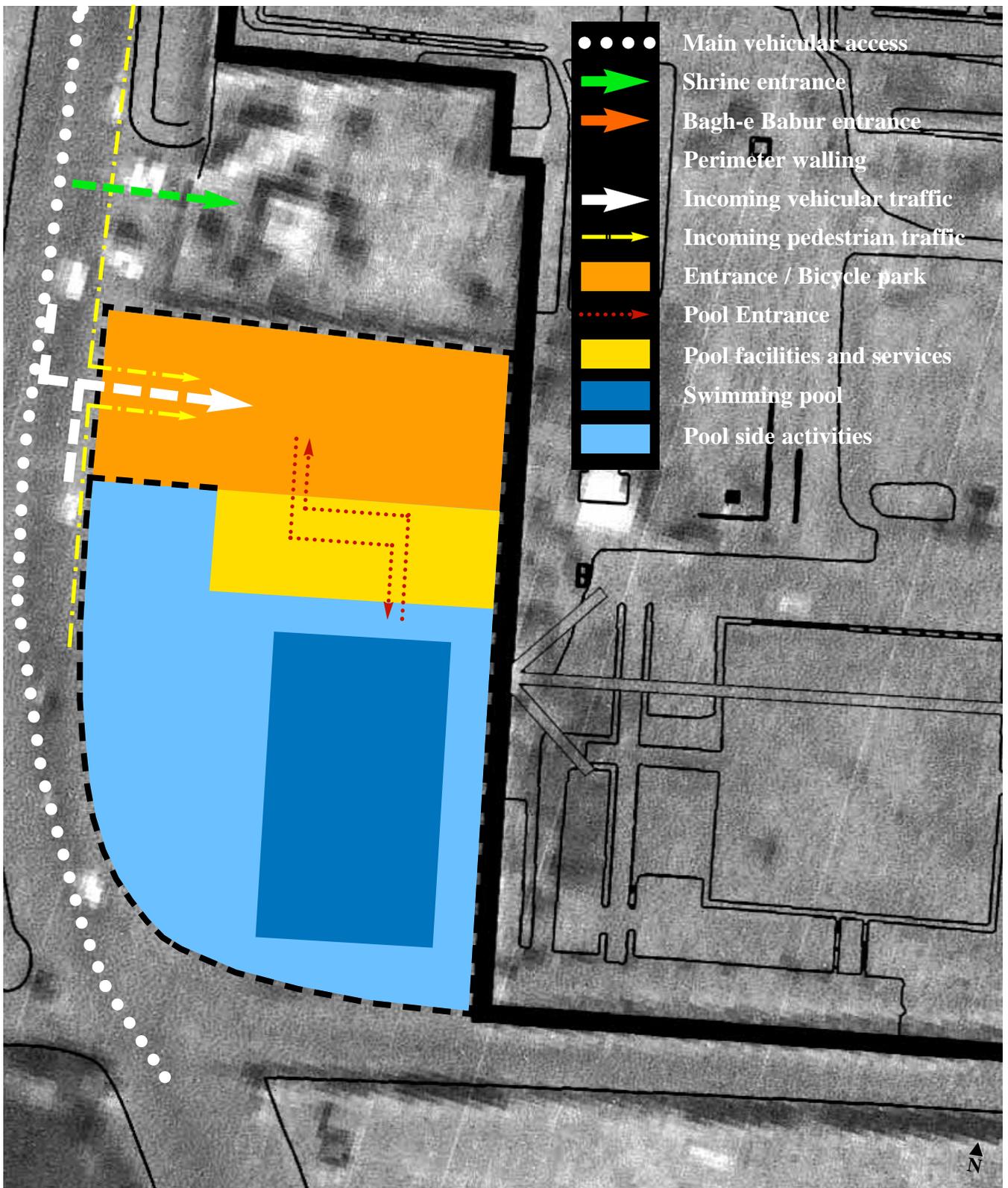
- PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION
- VEHICULAR ACCESS
- ZONE FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION
- PROPOSED MAIN ENTRANCE
- EXISTING VEHICULAR ENTRANCE
- PROPOSED PATHS & STAIRS UPPER TERRACE
- SMALLER FRUIT & FLOWERING TREES ORCHARD WITH SPACES FOR PICNIC
- DENSE ORCHARD WITH LARGE FRUIT TREES
- LARGE SHADE TREES BETWEEN PATII & ORCHARD WITH GAPS TO ENABLE VIEW OF BUILDING WALL
- LARGE CHINAR TREES TO EMPHASISE AXIAL OPEN SPACE

Notes:
Existing trees not shown. To be integrated in detailed proposal

5. PROPOSED RELOCATION OF PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL

Land has been allocated adjacent to the garden for the construction of a new public swimming pool to replace the existing one. While the existing pool provides an important recreational function for some Kabulis, the new location will provide a facility built to higher standards, which will ensure wider access and better safety. Another advantage of the relocation will be the greater degree of privacy that the relocation provides for the upper terraces of the garden, particularly for family groups.





The land that has been made available for the construction of the new swimming pool offers more direct public access for a facility that is heavily used during the summer months. In an area that is already under pressure for redevelopment, the allocation of this site for low-rise public use protects the integrity of the environment of the historic garden.

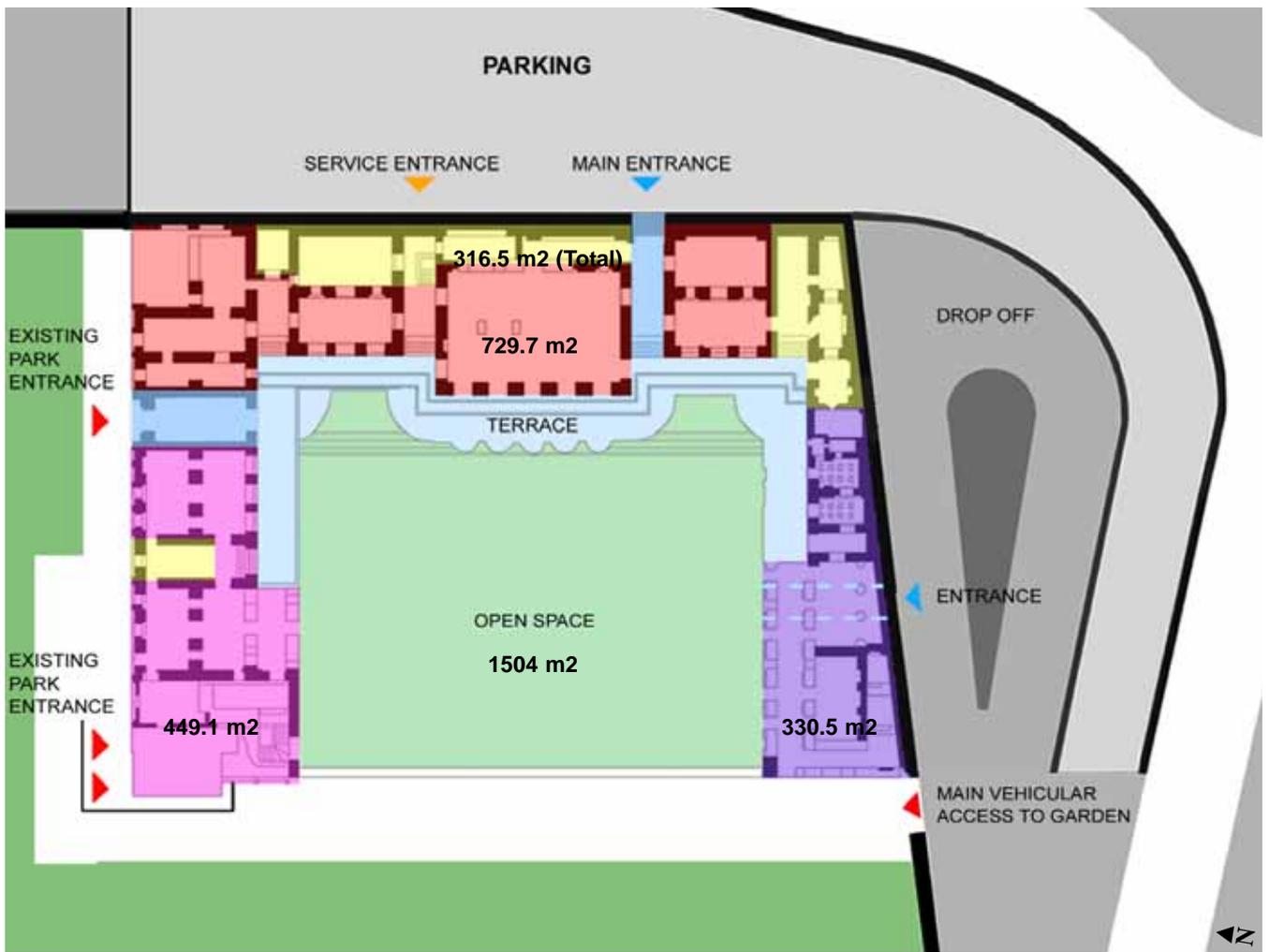
6. RE-USE OF THE QUEEN'S PALACE COMPLEX

This partial birds-eye view focuses on the upper terraces of the garden from the west, and shows (on the right) the ruins of the Queen's Palace. This complex of buildings represents the largest built structure in the garden, occupying a commanding location that relates to adjacent terraces of the upper garden that are of great historic significance. These include Babur's grave enclosure and the Shah Jehani mosque in the centre of this image. These terraces will be the focus for initial landscaping measures during spring of 2004, creating a more contemplative space that will be distinct from the more public lower areas of the garden.

The existing U-shaped configuration of the complex with its distinct wings of varying areas, allows for diverse range of events and gatherings while at the same time maintaining a degree of privacy between different uses. For example, while the main building and the north wing could be used for a major social function such as a wedding or a diplomatic reception, the south wing could retain the intimacy of an exhibition space or a small cultural event. In addition, in the spring and summer the extensive open space that lies at the centre of the complex could serve as an outdoor auditorium or the scene for a major reception. The orientation of the central court of the complex towards the west, with views across to the Paghman mountains, is a major incentive to developing it as a focus for the entire complex. The relation between the Queen's Palace and the upper terraces of the garden, which include Babur's Grave, is important and could allow for functions to expand into this area.

Given that the complex is currently in ruins, little more than brick walls survive, there is potential to significantly rethink the architectural character, while preserving the footprint and levels of the original building. For example the sweeping roof of the original building could be reinterpreted in the form of a wing-like roof floating over the ruined walling, and sheltering a diversity of modern uses.





- SERVICE AREAS
- SOUTH WING
- NORTH WING
- MAIN BUILDING
- ENTRANCE AREAS

TOTAL SITE AREA: 4048 m²
TOTAL PROPOSED BUILDING AREA: 1825.8 m²
 MAIN BUILDING: 729.7 m²
 NORTH WING: 449.1 m²
 SOUTH WING: 330.5 m²
 CIRCULATION: 365.2 m²
 TOTAL SERVICES: 316.5 m²
 ENTRANCE AREAS: 164.2 m²

TOTAL COVERED LETTABLE AREA: 1509.3 m²
OPEN LETTABLE AREAS:
 OPEN SPACE: 1203.2 m²
 (minus circulation)

TERRACE: 166.2 m²
 (minus circulation)

Preliminary architectural analysis of the ruined complex indicates the potential for a range of different spaces. Separate entrances for each wing, either from the exterior or from inside the garden, ensure flexibility and security for the complex as a whole. The extent of service areas shown would need to be confirmed by a more detailed technical feasibility study. The assumption is that the area to the east of the existing perimeter wall would be extensively excavated to allow for access on a level with the major function rooms and to allow for a service entrance and additional offsite parking.

Areas of the ruined building that would merit more detailed conservation are the hammam in the south wing and the entrance areas in the north wing. Both could be incorporated into a more contemporary architectural treatment without affecting their integrity. Whatever architectural solution is sought, however, it would be vital to preserve the existing character of the external elevations, particularly on the two perimeter walls. On the other hand, the treatment of the western and northern elevations could creatively introduce a new character with the stucco and brick-work that survives of the original building.

7. INSTITUTIONAL AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

In addition to the core activities that have been outlined above, the following key cross-cutting issues will be considered within the next stages of the rehabilitation programme:

Institutional, ownership and operational issues

The integrated approach adopted by AKTC/HCSF towards rehabilitation of the garden has inevitably raised a range of issues related to institutional responsibilities. While these were initially identified in the Memorandum of Understanding signed in May 2002 between AKTC, the Ministry of Information & Culture of the Interim Afghan Administration and Kabul Municipality, there is a need to sustain a dialogue with these and other institutions to resolve issues such as:

- coordination of activities of the various official departments within Kabul Municipality (culture, greenery, sports, traffic), the Ministry of Information & Culture and other official institutions within the administration.
- identification of specific responsibilities for the operation and management of the garden, during and after rehabilitation. This of necessity should be based on considerations of legal ownership and a range of other issues, including official policy towards the generation of revenue from public facilities such as the garden. This will form the basis for a joint operational agreement for key components of the garden, to be drawn up by AKTC/HCSF and its partners in the rehabilitation programme.

Revenue and co-funding

While the garden does currently generate revenue, through modest entrance fees, these barely cover the costs of maintenance staff. There will therefore continue to be a need for significant investments in both physical rehabilitation and operation of the site, even if additional revenue can be generated in time from the pavilion or Queen's Palace. AKTC/HCSF has succeeded in attracting generous support from the government of Germany for the rehabilitation of the perimeter walling, and will continue to seek contributions from other donors in 2004. Given the interest that the garden continues to generate among donors, it will be important to ensure that AKTC/HCSF has oversight for fund-raising, which will be based on a coherent set of priorities. This will help to mitigate the risk of competition between donors or partner institutions, which could compromise the programme as a whole.

Balancing conservation with improvements in living conditions

The economic and physical impact of the conflict on urban communities, in Kabul as elsewhere, has been devastating. In the case of the neighbourhood adjoining Baghe Babur, all families were displaced after 1993, and had their houses destroyed or looted in their absence. While many have been able to return to their homes, they continue to live in poor conditions with only very rudimentary public services, at best. Just as they look to the garden as a social and recreational focus, of which they are guardians, so they expect that investments being made in its rehabilitation result in tangible benefits to their neighbourhood. It is envisaged, therefore, that the project team will work closely with community representatives to develop a programme of labour-intensive works that will result in improvements to water supplies, drainage, household sanitation and flood-protection, while generating much-needed employment in the area. This will be one way of achieving a sense of ownership in the rehabilitation programme.