The Gardens Trust



70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ
Phone: (+44/0) 207 608 2409

Email: enquiries@thegardenstrust.org
www.thegardenstrust.org

Research - Conserve - Campaign

1st June 2021

Dear Mr Gould,

**Response to the Historic England, Draft Industrial Heritage Strategy**

The Gardens Trust (GT) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Industrial Heritage Strategy. It is important that the GT is part of the strong ongoing collaboration between Historic England (HE) and partner organisations in protecting this heritage and enabling it to thrive as part of local and regional identities. The GT agrees with the approach outlined in the document of setting out a clear vision for the protection of industrial heritage and the examination of 9 issues (protection including of settings, understanding etc) and 4 themes (extractive industries etc) together with key areas for action by HE and partner organisations

Although the GT is principally involved with research into, conservation and protection of historic designed landscapes (such as public parks, parks and gardens relating to country houses), it is recognised that there are aspects of industrial landscape which form the backbone to understanding and appreciation of industrial heritage. For example, there are industrial landscapes which may be designed or incidental to the wider setting of industrial heritage. These may include whole valleys with a series of textile mills contained within them as in around Halifax or areas of towns and rural areas adjacent to railways, rivers, canals or docks with concentrations of industrial buildings such as mills (flour, plush, tweed), breweries, agricultural machinery works etc. In other cases, such as at Port Sunlight, Unilever provided workers housing in a model village with gardens and amenity space for fresh air, exercise and the cultivation of vegetables. From the industrial valleys of the north or landscape of tin mines on the rugged Cornish coastline, the inner courtyards between industrial buildings where plush looms were operated in the fresh air, or the floral displays on the Cathedral Express line station platforms such as at Malvern, these naturalistic or designed landscapes make strong contributions to local and regional identities.

Some of our 20th century industrial heritage too, such as power stations, reservoirs or flyovers have settings which are landscapes specifically designed for them by eminent architects, planners and landscape architects such as Maxwell Fry and Peter Youngman (Pilkington Glass Factory), Sylvia Crowe (who wrote the influential ‘Landscape of Power’ and designed the landscape setting to Cumberland Bridge flyover, Bristol), Brenda Colvin or Sir Frederick Gibberd (Didcot A Power Station, Derwent Reservoir). These 20th century landscape settings, many of which have insufficient recognition, appreciation or protection, may well qualify for future inclusion as important industrial landscapes on the HE Register of parks, gardens and landscapes. They deserve to be urgently researched and assessed for inclusion on the national Register or included in Local Development Plans as assets of local interest.

The GT agrees with one of the concerns expressed in the document that there is a lack of consistency in the identification, conservation and redevelopment of industrial sites, leading to unnecessary loss, poor schemes and missed opportunities. Whilst it is easy to put the remedy for this into the remit of local authorities to undertake, there is often a lack of staff, lack of political will and lack of finance to undertake such work.

However, it is essential and not too late, especially where there are proposals for large scale infrastructure schemes such as for road, rail or large-scale housing developments, to get studies including Landscape and Visual Assessment or Heritage Impact Assessments as part of planning permission applications. Even better, the GT would encourage characterisation studies and industrial heritage studies to be carried out and form Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) alongside Local Development Plans. This more pro-active approach would appear to fit with the proposed reform to the planning system in the proposed zoning of areas for conservation or development. For example, prior to the redevelopment of large areas of the 18th to 20th century industrial areas of Banbury, Oxfordshire, Cherwell District Council commissioned an Industrial Archaeology Survey of the Oxford Canal Corridor by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in 2001. This identified areas of pre and post 1800 industrial heritage much of which had previously not been known and allowed decisions to be made based on a greater understanding of the relative significance of the contextual relationships and industrial heritage surveyed and researched. This included for example corn warehouses, rope works and associated housing, a dry dock, malt houses, an Electric power station (1901), Co-op Dairy, (1930s), 19th century canal grain warehouses with stabling, Timber yards, Sewage works (1922), Cherwell Works- iron founders, millwrights, machinists and engineers (1880s), Paving and lighting commission and gas works.

Whilst the demolition of many industrial buildings is often lamented, such as of breweries, the last remaining plush mill and Spencer’s Corset factory in Banbury, to make way for office or housing redevelopment, the study at least has provided an opportunity for assessment, understanding and preservation by record as well as the retention and conversion of some of the buildings to new uses.

Protection of industrial heritage is seen as being provided under listing, conservation areas, world heritage sites and scheduling of archaeological remains. Local listing is also mentioned, and this is where the GT and local County Garden Trusts may be able to support initiatives for preservation of local and regional industrial heritage identities through research and drawing up of register entries for local lists in tandem with local authority’s conservation officers and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. HE is showcasing Heritage Action Zones (HAZ) such as RW Town of Swindon, Greater Grimsby Fishing Port etc which can underpin successful regeneration projects and TGT supports this approach and the sustainable re-use of buildings and sites

The GT believes that there should be a comprehensive assessment of the designed landscapes around industrial heritage that exist or have been lost, including those which may now come under classification as nature reserves, and that the opportunity should be taken to raise the profile of these sites through research, publication and particularly through lectures, study days and online forums. The GT would welcome the opportunity to work with HE in drawing up a published national list of Industrial Designed Landscapes- existing and gone, Registered or not. Importantly, the GT has developed a recognised capacity for delivering training at many levels and could also co-opt expert speakers to swell the capacity and reach on this specific topic

The GT supports the draft strategy and looks forward to ongoing consultation and collaboration on industrial heritage, landscapes and settings.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Stradling

(For the GT Conservation Committee)