



### **Audience Development Marketing and Communications Committee (ADMC)**

Over the past twelve months ADMC has guided and supported a number of audience development, marketing and communications projects. The Committee has made a significant contribution to the development of the three year Business Plan (currently being finalised) and led the way in developing an approach to feeding into the Business Plan which was replicated by other Committees.

Over the past twelve months, one of the main priorities for ADMC has been to support the implementation of the NHLF project *Engaging with our Futures*, specifically the creation of a three year audience development plan. ADMC oversaw and responded to a key piece of quantitative market research which gathered views of GT members, CGT members and an external panel of 1000 individuals, to learn more about their motivations, interests and passions in relation to historic designed landscapes as well as the barriers for engagement. This research has been the foundation for the creation of the audience development plan and ADMC has worked closely with the NLHF funded Audience Development Consultant to identify and agree objectives and three year activities. In addition to the development of the audience development plan, ADMC has been involved in reviewing the membership proposition and benefits in order to strengthen these and encourage more people to join the GT. Pilot membership recruitment activity is planned for the autumn. The final audience development plan will be presented to the Board for approval in October 2022.

In addition to the audience development plan, ADMC has worked with the NLHF funded Fundraising Consultant to contribute to the development of a three year fundraising plan and in particular to ensure that there is synergy with any audience development work. This plan will also be presented to the board for approval in October 2022.

Alongside supporting the NHLF *Engaging with our Futures* project, ADMC has worked with the GT communications team to develop a communications checklist as well as an annual communications planner. Both of these have played an important role in enhancing the GT's communications activity, including increasing our digital output and developing content which has a broader and more diverse appeal. Alongside these initiatives, ADMC has commenced a piece of work to review and refresh the Gardens Trust's key messaging and tone of voice.

ADMC is helping with activity in relation to the publication of a special 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Garden History*. Planned activity includes engaging with early career garden historians through webinars and lectures and using the anniversary edition to reach out to new audiences such as landscape architects, garden designers and horticulturalists working in historic designed landscapes.

In addition to the above activities ADMC is also supporting a vital piece of work to oversee the migration of data management from our former database held and managed by Lavenhams to the Beacon CRM system. On completion in the autumn this new CRM system will offer the GT significant improvements in managing membership and supporter data as well as being able to create more bespoke and relevant communications.

We extend our thanks for the contribution of Paul Titcombe, who is standing down this September, and are grateful in particular for his work in guiding us through the business planning process. We are delighted to welcome two new members to ADMC, Christopher Weddell and Catriona Stenhouse and look forward to working with them over the coming year.

**Rachel Savage, Chair, ADMC**

## **Conservation Committee**

### **As statutory consultee**

A key role of the Conservation Committee is to oversee and support the essential work of the Gardens Trust (GT) as statutory consultee, reviewing and responding to planning applications that impact on historic designed landscapes, working with County Gardens Trusts (CGTs).

The consultation statistics set out below indicate how the conservation team, comprising Margie Hoffnung (Conservation Officer), Alison Allighan (Conservation Casework Manager) and Daniel Bowles (Assistant Conservation Casework Manager) have continued to monitor, manage and respond to a year on year increasing number of consultations. An effective triage system enables prompt circulation to the CGT volunteers who work closely with the team. The weekly casework lists and monthly summary of responses submitted are circulated to help facilitate liaison and working together so that the necessary responses can be submitted within the specified consultation period.

The total number of consultations received for the calendar year **2021 (in bold)**, (2020 figures in brackets for comparison) comprising all planning applications, pre-applications, Historic England (HE) consultations, Local Plans, National Policy, Neighbourhood Plans and General Correspondence for England was **2,389** (1,961) and for Wales **14** (15).

Of these **1,533** (1,108) were statutory consultations for England. Responses (to all types of consultations) were as follows: GT written responses submitted **255** (163); CGT written responses **588** (430); GT no comments submitted **551** (310); CGT no comments **84** (145), an overall increase of **430** responses compared with 2020.

### **Casework logging**

All incoming consultations, both statutory and non-statutory, are logged by the Assistant Conservation Casework Manager. Where available, information regarding appeals, outcomes, and re-consultations are also logged.

The GT casework log is the key operational tool for the logging of consultations, distribution of these to the volunteer network assisting with responses, HE and other heritage and environmental organisations, as well as internally to the GT conservation team. It is also the

database and archive for active and historic responses. The platform is now 20 years old. Functionality is adequate for the logging process but there is no capacity for any development or upgrade. Recent proposals for development of analytical methodology have highlighted its shortcomings. The other six national amenity societies have been looking at similar issues as they develop their joint casework log (JCNAS (Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies) log) and following discussion, HE has granted funding for the latest upgrade of the JCNAS log to include development to accommodate the GT. Work is underway to integrate the GT casework logging with the JCNAS log.

Integrating with the JCNAS system will put the GT casework logging process on a stable platform which is updated and maintained. If and when planning reform requires a digitally integrated consultation process, we will be well positioned. Full alignment and collaboration with our casework and that of the other amenity societies will enhance our work and strengthen our voice as part of a collaborative group.

### **Casework matters**

It is difficult to give anything more than a brief snapshot of the planning applications the conservation team and county gardens trust volunteers respond to. Those which grab the headlines are often the most complex and as such are reflective of the time and passion expended in explaining the potential damage proposed developments can have on registered parks and gardens and seeking to persuade an alternative approach to achieve informed conservation. Here are one or two examples, also highlighted by Margie Hoffnung in her AGM presentation.

### **Stowe landscape garden and park, Buckingham**

Very few people would disagree that the Georgian Grade I registered landscape at Stowe is one the most important landscapes in England. Over the past 18 months the GT has worked closely with Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust to try to persuade Stowe School not to build a new Design and Technology department in the Pyramid Wood, an area specifically recognised in the Conservation Management Plan for the landscape as being one of the most sensitive surviving parts of the original designed parkland.

The Georgian Group, HE and the GT all objected strongly to the proposal, as did Buckinghamshire Council's own planning and conservation officers who took the very unusual step of employing an independent expert to give them a second opinion. Regrettably, Buckinghamshire Council's planning committee approved the application, ignoring advice from all the conservation bodies and experts. Our request for the decision to be called in was refused. The Planning Inspectorate argued that planning matters should be decided at a local level unless of national importance. Judicial Review of the decision was not an option that the GT could pursue. The GT will continue to collaborate with Stowe School and the National Trust in relation to future applications.

### **Development at Hampton Court station, East Molesey**

The GT is fortunate in having the support of leading experts when a response requires comprehensive input which would envelop the conservation team and detrimentally impact on its ability to respond to the thousands of other consultations it receives. Dr Sarah Rutherford stepped forward when the GT received a consultation in relation to an application to build 97 dwelling units, retail units, an 84-bed hotel, and car parking across the river and in clear view of Hampton Court Palace and the Grade I registered Palace

grounds. An Historic Impact Assessment enabled a sustained campaign in collaboration with Historic Royal Parks which resulted in the application being comprehensively rejected by Elmbridge Council (Elmbridge) in July 2021. The developer lodged an appeal.

Dr Rutherford appeared at the Inquiry representing the GT with others in early July 2022, but to great disappointment, the Inspector allowed the appeal. Encouragingly, Elmbridge has challenged this outcome based on the Inspector's lack of regard to the advice given by HE and the GT. Elmbridge's challenge has been slightly boosted by the response which HE sent us when we wrote to them during the inquiry urging them to strengthen their earlier objection. HE's letter, which clarifies and states their position slightly more strongly was not seen by the original Inspector. Our continued and vociferous objections may also prove to be useful for Elmbridge's case. The outcome, if the appeal decision is quashed, will be a re-run of the inquiry.

What matters in assessing whether a proposal might cause harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset, which includes its setting. Where potential harm to a designated heritage asset is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm in order to identify which planning policies will apply. Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision maker having regard to the circumstances of the case and planning policy. This is a complex area but as a starting premise, planning policy makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification. The GT will be closely following the judicial response in this case as it progresses.

### **Wimbledon Park, London**

Highly informative of the balancing act performed with each individual case is an ongoing application which will be of interest to all who were gripped by the tantrums and excitement of Wimbledon this summer. The All England Lawn Tennis Club has bought Wimbledon Park Golf Club and applied to build 38 additional grass tennis courts and an 8000 seater new Parkland Stadium. The site is a Grade II\* registered park and garden (RPG), designed by Capability Brown and now on the 'at risk' register. The crux of the matter is deciding whether the irrevocable loss of some RPG to the new structures is offset by the potential public and heritage benefits. The creation of a totally new 9.4ha parkland in London, on land previously inaccessible to the general public, with permissive general access for around 10 months of the year when the tennis tournaments are not taking place, in our view, constitutes a substantial public benefit. Remodelling the golf course landform, and restoration of many acres of land to something approaching its original designed parkland is another heritage gain. The extremely large lake will be dredged and put back to the close approximation of its original form with a new circular boardwalk reinstating the opportunity to walk right around the lake. This will certainly be a very popular new public benefit. Each of the remaining 41 veteran trees will have individual management plans, and new planting will be historically appropriate. There is also a long-term landscape plan which will make future management and protection of Wimbledon Park as an historic landscape far more likely.

The GT's main concern is the erection of the new Parkland Stadium in relation to which direct public benefit is open to question as it is undeniably a commercial development. The application has attracted much negative comment, but after lengthy discussions with HE, Capability Brown experts and London Parks & Gardens Trust, the GT has determined that the

likelihood of finding an alternative to fund the enormous heritage improvements and subsequent long-term maintenance of the newly created parkland, is unlikely. We have therefore supported the proposals with caveats.

### **Hulton Park, Bolton**

A controversial and long running case relates to the proposals for a Ryder Cup golf course, golfing centre, executive housing, holiday accommodation etc. which would destroy Hulton Park (Grade II), Bolton and encroach on the adjacent Green Belt and Protected Open Land. Permission was granted on appeal in 2020 but the developers have now submitted proposals for a larger scheme which will destroy not only Hulton Park but even more of the adjacent greenspace and open land. Permission was again refused by Bolton Council, but the latest Appeal has now been lodged. Meanwhile the existing permission is still extant.

### **Thornbridge Hall, Derbyshire**

This is one of the most extreme cases of unauthorised planning the GT has experienced.. Without applying for planning consent, to the Derbyshire Peak District National Park Authority, nor consulting the GT, over lockdown the owners of the Grade II RPG at Thornbridge Hall constructed a new two-lane access road and built a new car park and café. An enforcement notice requiring removal of this unauthorised development has been issued, but the owners have appealed. The new two-lane road runs for its entirety through the historic parkland, disrupting several important designed views, and ends at the sizeable car park. The café with its extensive outdoor seating and associated paraphernalia, has been built in part of the former working garden and orchard very close to various Grade II listed statues and structures. The GT has objected in the strongest possible terms to the development and we await the public inquiry due to take place in October 2022.

### **Marston Park, Somerset**

On occasion a positive outcome from a response is more tangible. For several years the GT and the Somerset Gardens Trust have been objecting to various iterations of an application to put 20 holiday lodges, and other associated buildings to house reception/café/spa/gym etc, adjacent to the lake at the Grade II registered Marston Park in Somerset. The GT position is that the development will bring about a permanent, irreversible and detrimental change to the landscape. The proposed holiday village lies at the heart of the W.S. Gilpin picturesque landscape around the lake, which acts as the principal eyecatcher/vista from the elevated position of the house. The house has always looked out over its unlit park, over the lake to an un-peopled, designed view which included the borrowed landscape of the distant hills. The estate is in divided ownership and the application site, which has been completely neglected for the past 60 years or so, was retained by the family who purchased the entire estate in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century selling off the mansion and surrounding grounds c1984.

A masterplan has been through several amendments with the application remaining undecided. At the end of last year, the applicants changed tack and applied instead for a 'Certificate of Lawful Use' (or CLU), citing that the land had been used for fishing and shooting around the lake for many years and that these activities had necessitated the use of various large structures which had remained in situ for more than the occasional night's *ad hoc* camping by fishermen.

Images on Google Earth proved that until 2020 the area around the lake had been free of any significant structures. In 2020, some white tents appeared, and in 2021 these tent-like structures multiplied considerably. This was confirmed by an article in the Somerset News

which stated that: 'Marston Park started offering tent accommodation for two months last summer as an "experiment". We had not received any planning applications for these glamping structures. We feared that this application for a CLU was an attempt to avoid having to ask for retrospective permission, citing the occasional overnight stay by fishermen as prior examples of camping on the lakeside shore. If allowed, this could open the gates for future more permanent structures around the lake. The GT wrote a 4<sup>th</sup> letter of objection opposing any attempt to commercialise such holiday activities at Marston. To our great relief the CLU was comprehensively turned down and Mendip District Council quoted our letter in some detail in their officer's report. They concluded that '*The applicant has failed to demonstrate, on the balance of probabilities, that the claimed leisure uses (fishing, shooting, camping, walking, BBQ's and picnics) have continued without material interruption for a period of 10 years immediately prior to the date of the application.*'

### **Government planning policy consultations**

Our authoritative and well-respected planning responses lead the GT campaigning voice facilitating informed conservation in relation to in excess of two thousand consultations per annum. The GT also strives to influence decision-makers at all levels to protect historic designed landscapes. From time to time, members of the Conservation Committee respond to government consultations, most recently including the DEFRA Landscapes Review (National Parks and AONBs) and DEFRA Consultations on Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations and Implementation. As a member of JCNAS, we have engaged in a joint response to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill consultation. Working alongside the other amenity societies we continue to raise the profile of the designed landscape putting it on the same page for consideration as statutorily protected heritage assets.

It is opportune to finish this report on a particularly high note. The GT is delighted that a provision in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill provides that the statutory duties with regards to listed buildings and conservation areas, contained in the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* will be extended to introduce a statutory duty for a local planning authority/the Secretary of State when considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle to have special regard to desirability of preserving or enhancing designated heritage assets not covered in the 1990 Act along with their settings: i.e. Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Protected Wreck Sites, and Registered Battlefields and Registered Parks & Gardens. The GT will continue to monitor and lobby to ensure that this proposal (or indeed something more robust) becomes law. A quantum leap forward for the preservation of the historic designed landscape through the planning process.

Chris Blandford will take over as Chair of the Conservation Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> September. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with many of you in the Gardens Trust community during my seven years as a Trustee, working with the conservation team as Vice Chair of the committee and Chair over the last two years. Thank you for all your support.

**Sarah Dickinson, Chair, Conservation Committee.**

## Education & Training Committee

While there was virtually no return to “live” events in 2021 our online programme has continued to be very successful. Our wonderful volunteer team has been extremely professional in the administration, commissioning and technical aspects of the programme and their enthusiasm and hard work has meant we have been able to run 4 or 5 events a week between September and June.

These have included a regular weekly series as part of our *Unforgettable Gardens* project which have been run in partnership with County Gardens Trusts (CGTs) and other organisations including the National Trust, English Heritage and the Historic Gardens Foundation. Our chronological courses on Garden History continued and there have been other specialist and general courses covering a wide range of subjects, some organised in partnership with other groups including the Friends of the Landscape Institute Archives, the Japanese Garden Society, and the Historic Roses Group.

By keeping prices low and offering further discounts on booking whole series or courses, we have maintained our reputation for being good value for money. Although our audience continues to be mainly from the UK there is also a substantial international element. Ticket sales were rarely below 150 and more usually well over 200. All told in 2021 we sold over ten thousand tickets which raised £59k and helped the Trust to achieve greater financial stability.

We have been able to continue “loaning” our large audience Zoom licence to CGTs and to the Garden History Seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, offering them technical support and saving them money in the process. We intended to carry on seeking new partnership arrangements.

Once again, we had to postpone both our Annual Conference and the annual garden history Conference held in association with Oxford University’s Department for Continuing Education. Plans for both have been carried forward. However, we managed to hold one live lecture series in partnership with the Garden Museum in November 2021. Numbers were limited by social distancing to about 20 but the lectures were also live-streamed. It is hoped to hold more events in the near future and we are also planning to restart live events in partnership with Birmingham University’s Winterbourne House and Gardens.

Our New Research Symposium was run online and was so successful in attracting proposals that we had to run two sessions which between them had a total audience of over 400.

The Mavis Batey Essay Prize was won by Anthony Davis, a student at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL for *The Mirror in the Bike Shed*, an essay about an Arts and Crafts style garden store of 1909. This has been published in *Garden History*.

*Garden History*, under the editorship of Barbara Simms and *GT News* under the editorship of Charles Boot appeared as usual despite lockdown, whilst our e-Bulletin has gone from strength to strength under Charlotte Casella’s editorship and has become a key mode of communication with both members and non-members.

*The Education and Events committee was reformed and became the Education and Training Committee. Several long standing members took the opportunity to stand down and we are very grateful for their hard work and commitment. The new committee has yet to meet face to face but hopes to do so soon!* **Dr David Marsh, Chair, Education & Training Committee**