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The Gardens Trust's response to the government's intention to consult on removing it as a statutory consultee

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The Gardens Trust is dismayed to learn that the government intends to consider removing it as a statutory consultee within the English planning system.

We don't recognise ourselves in the government's characterisation of statutory consultees. We only rarely miss the 21 day response deadline (remarkable given that we work closely with local volunteers in forming our responses), and last year objected to less than 10% of our consultations, with the remainder of our responses being simply supportive advice.

We are passionate about the role that the UK's world-famous historic parks and gardens can play in supporting positive economic growth and healthy cohesive societies, and eager to continue helping this in our role as statutory consultee.

A readymade toolbox of parks and gardens

The UK benefits from a unique readymade green cultural infrastructure in a network of historic designed landscapes, created over hundreds of years by this nation of garden lovers. Often referred to as 'historic parks and gardens', these special places have an important role to play as tools to address the key issues of our time, as highlighted by the government's mission, such as:

- Growing the economy, as historic parks and gardens support well-designed development with ready-made access to pre-existing greenspace. They also add hugely to the UK's tourism economy, being one of the biggest drivers in this field, nationally and internationally.
- Meeting the challenges of the climate emergency, as landscapes have historically supported the provision of energy use and generation and we are keen to show how this can be done. They are critical too in supporting nature recovery, especially as older, established landscapes support biodiversity significantly more than newly-created open space.
- Fostering safer streets, as public parks play an important role in social cohesion by offering both places to come together and build communities, as well as offering places for wellbeing, play and recreation for all. This is the reason that so many of them were created in the mid-19th century and challenging inter-war periods.
- Ensuring that the NHS is fit for the future, because parks help reduce demand on the NHS by offering free-to-access places to exercise and enjoy fresh air, critical for health and wellbeing.
- Nurturing opportunity for all, because not only does an active parks and gardens sector support inclusive access to leisure but it also offers a range of accessible career pathways.

Communities' love for their heritage of parks and gardens

Economic growth and positive development is vital to move the UK forwards. It is essential that communities' need for parks and gardens is reflected in this.

People in 'levelling up' areas significantly value local parks and green spaces as the thing that most helps foster pride in their local town, city or village, according to the Public First survey commissioned by Historic England in 2018.

Research commissioned by the Gardens Trust in 2021 found that 75% of those consulted, who are not involved in the Gardens Trust said 'I'd be devastated if local historic sites/green spaces in my local area were built on'.

About the Gardens Trust

The Gardens Trust is the only national organisation exclusively focused on historic designed landscapes, commonly known as 'historic parks and gardens'. A charity, the Gardens Trust represents and supports the 36 local volunteer County Garden Trusts in England, the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, and works with related bodies across the UK.

We give advice on the conservation of historic parks and gardens, provide expert knowledge to help guide the ongoing use of these special places and help make sure that they are accessible to people across the country. This includes supporting volunteers to research and record historic parks and gardens and make sure that the information is lodged in Historic Environment Records, where they can be accessed by developers and local authority planners.

In 2025 the Gardens Trust will be publishing an expert report into the value of historic parks and gardens in a changing society and the role they can play in development, tourism, healthy communities and nature recovery.

You can read more about the Gardens Trust's work, including examples of our statutory consultee casework, at [Our Impact - The Gardens Trust](#)

The Gardens Trust as a statutory consultee

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee for all planning applications that may affect a site nationally designated on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. There are over 1700 Registered parks and gardens, split into Grades I, II*, II.

Registered Parks and Gardens include urban public parks ranging from internationally famous Birkenhead Park in Merseyside to small sites adored locally, globally iconic 'English gardens' such as Chatsworth in Derbyshire or Sissinghurst in Kent, places of remembrance such as Highgate Cemetery in London, institutional landscapes such as the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, and community hubs such as Stoney Road Allotments, Coventry, seaside gardens such as the Marine Gardens in Clacton.

The Gardens Trust receives some 1800 planning application consultations each year, and provides local planning authorities with many hundreds of constructive advice recommendations to support positive change. Around 80% of our comments are advice to support approval of planning permission, with only 20% expressing serious reservations about proposals.

To support the Gardens Trust's statutory consultee work it receives a grant of £42,000 from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

In order to deliver its statutory consultee role, the Gardens Trust's small team of national paid Conservation Officers and experts working pro bono coordinates a volunteer army across 36 affiliated County Gardens Trusts.