

14.03.2025

The Gardens Trust urges UK Government to reconsider proposal to remove statutory consultee status

The Gardens Trust is urging the UK Government to reconsider its plans, announced on 10 March, to remove the role of the Trust as a statutory consultee on planning applications.

Currently, local Planning Authorities are required to consult the Gardens Trust on planning applications that might affect sites on the statutory Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, to ensure nature, heritage and local communities are considered in the planning of new developments.

Linden Groves, Head of Operations & Strategy at the Gardens Trust said:

“We are deeply concerned by the Government’s plans to remove our critical role as a statutory consultee. If enacted, this will significantly weaken the safeguarding of the nation’s well-loved historic parks and gardens, putting these irreplaceable cultural assets at greater risk of loss or destruction.

“We are consulted on 1800 planning applications each year, providing positive and constructive advice – and over 90% of our responses do not object to proposed development or lead to delays. We are urging the Government to reconsider removing this essential scrutiny from the process.”

The Gardens Trust receives an annual grant of £42,000 from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to fulfil its role and ensure expert oversight and technical advice is provided to decision makers across England. The Gardens Trust is engaging with stakeholders about the implications of the Government’s proposal.

President Dominic Cole BA DipLA. CMLI. FI Hort. RHS VMM. OBE, said:

“Historic parks and gardens are for all of us - they bring delight, beauty, joy and peace. They are rich sources of stories and places of discovery and inspiration, uniting people from all backgrounds, but they are constantly at risk because everyone thinks they will be here, unchanged, forever.

“We have been inundated with expressions of concern and support from the public and the organisations we work with to continuously protect and promote the country’s beloved – and world-envied – parks and gardens. We remain committed to working collaboratively with decision-makers to ensure that these special places continue to thrive alongside new homes and necessary infrastructure development.”

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For media enquiries, interviews, or further information, please contact:

Aimee Philipson

Mobile: 07920093375

Email: press@gardenstrust.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thegardenstrust>

X: <https://x.com/thegardenstrust>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thegardenstrust/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpCILRc6V0T062MCHS0TSSQ>

About the Gardens Trust

The Gardens Trust is the only UK national charity dedicated to protecting and conserving our heritage of designed landscapes. It campaigns on their behalf, undertakes research and conservation work, and encourages public appreciation and involvement. It provides specialist knowledge to guide conservation efforts, supports local volunteer groups across 36 County Gardens Trusts, and offers expert advice to developers and planners.

Historic parks and gardens include: globally iconic 'English Landscapes' such as Stowe, Buckinghamshire, Painshill, Surrey and Stourhead, Wiltshire, internationally acclaimed gardens such as Great Dixter, Sussex, or Sissinghurst, Kent; public parks like Wicksteed Park, Northamptonshire, Birkenhead Park, Merseyside and Hyde Park, London; community hubs such as Blaise Castle, Bristol and Stoney Road Allotments, Coventry; places of remembrance such as Highgate Cemetery, London; institutional landscapes such as the Royal Hospital, Chelsea and seaside gardens such as the Marine Gardens, Clacton. More recent additions to the Register include post-war colleges, housing developments, office complexes and greenspace within New Towns. Many are 'everyday' places to come together, exercise and celebrate, including local parks and playgrounds.