

Statement on the proposed removal of the Gardens Trust as a statutory consultee

At Historic Houses, we are disappointed and saddened to see the government's proposals to remove the Gardens Trust (and the Theatres Trust) as statutory consultees. Historic Houses represents around 1,450 independent historic houses and gardens across the UK: a significant share of the most highly listed heritage in the country. We estimate our members look after just under 10,000 acres of the UK's most significant and best-loved gardens.

The planning system needs reforming and streamlining to achieve economic growth. We are, and will remain, vocal about this. We regularly offer constructive suggestions to government to help them achieve this without sacrificing heritage protection.

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee for a reason. Historic landscapes, parks and gardens are as much a part of our rich shared heritage and national story as Norman castles, stately homes, industrial landscapes and inner-city modernist tower-blocks. Millions of people benefit from access to historic parks and gardens every year, enjoying the peace, fresh air, beauty and sense of well-being spending time rooted in nature can bring.

There are 1,700 registered historic parks and gardens in England. For government to suggest that it is organisations like the Gardens Trust, who are consulted specifically on changes that might affect these historic parks and gardens, that are blocking economic growth, infrastructure and house-building, is highly misleading. The Gardens Trust objected to fewer than 10% of applications they were consulted on in 2024.

Removing the Gardens Trust as a statutory consultee is not going to achieve the economic growth government is looking for, but it might just do irreparable damage to much-loved, world-famous historic gardens and landscapes.

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