

17 June 2025

### **Statement for Support of The Gardens Trust**

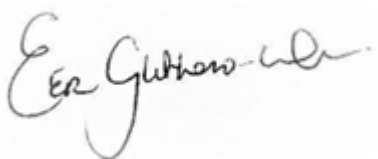
The Heritage Alliance is the national umbrella body for the independent heritage sector in England. We are a charity uniting more than 200 organisations, including statutory consultees such as the Gardens Trust and Theatres Trust – together, the organisations we represent have over 7 million members, volunteers, trustees and staff.

Our historic parks and gardens are a national asset of huge social, cultural, economic and environmental significance, with millions of people benefiting from access to them every year.

We are therefore concerned by the review of statutory consultees, announced by the Government in March, and believe that The Gardens Trust have been unfairly included in the scope of these reforms. For instance, the Trusts' own evidence shows that they respond to consultations in a timely manner, offering constructive pragmatic advice to local planning authorities, with objections in only a tiny minority of cases (e.g. in 2024-25, the Trust made only 85 objections out of 1,842 consultations). Furthermore, according to the Trust, the volunteer time that they and County Gardens Trust volunteers contribute to the planning system is £784,960 per year, whilst if local planning authorities had to employ staff to deliver historic designed landscape expertise in place of the Gardens Trust, they estimate that the cost would be almost £11million annually.

We need to understand the rationale for the proposal to remove the Gardens Trust from the list of statutory consultees and how planning authorities would be expected to compensate for the Trusts' specialised knowledge and expertise, and so continue to make informed and sustainable determinations. Expert advice is an asset to the planning system, whilst poor applications and a lack of expert advice often cause slow or poor decision-making.

We are pleased to see that this issue continues to be raised by MPs, including during the passage of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, and hope that the Government will listen to these concerns.



**Lizzie Glithero-West, CEO**