



31 July 2025

Ms. Linden Groves
Head of Operations and Strategy
The Gardens Trust
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ

Dear Ms. Groves

The Gardens Trust as a Statutory Consultee on Planning Applications

I write on behalf of The Arts Society, a UK charity of nearly 60 years standing and with more than 63,000 members. Our objects include arts education, the advancement of the arts through the giving of grants and the preservation of the nation's cultural heritage including historic parks and gardens.

The Board of The Arts Society was most concerned to learn of the Government's proposal to remove The Gardens Trust ("TGT") from its role as a Statutory Consultee on Planning Applications affecting gardens and landscapes listed in Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest. These parks and gardens are much-loved parts of our common cultural heritage.

We understand that the government's proposal is part of its plan to speed-up the planning process and that its principal objections are that the Statutory Consultees take too long to provide advice and submit advice that seeks 'gold-plated' outcomes. These criticisms do not apply to TGT which we understand deals with about 1,800 applications per year, usually

The Arts Society, 90 High Holborn, Office 4.45, LABS, London WC1V 6JL

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provides a response within 21 days. These responses are realistic, as TGT supports over 80% of the proposals reviewed but provides valuable and constructive comments on the remainder, quite rightly when these important cultural and recreational assets are at risk.

We note that most of your work is done by volunteers and that you receive about £42,000 per year in government funding for Conservation Officers, very good value for the taxpayer.

We consider that the usefulness of Statutory Consultees should be considered on a case by case basis. We would regard the removal of Statutory Consultee status from TGT as a short-sighted error of judgment and a loss to the planning process.

Please feel free to share this letter with others, as you consider appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Thomas', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jeremy Thomas,
Chair of Trustees
The Arts Society