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Andy Burnham, Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

20th July 2026

Dear Prime Minister

The Gardens Trust's status as Statutory Consultee

We are writing to alert you to the threat of the proposed planning system changes in safeguarding England's cultural and natural heritage of parks, gardens and other historic green spaces, and to seek your intervention.

As a long-standing statutory consultee, the Gardens Trust advises local planning authorities on changes to historic parks and gardens across the country, such as Alexandra Park in Manchester and Parliament Square in London, and how to accommodate new development such as housing. I attach a letter from Afzal Khan MP which sets out how imperative it is we conserve existing green space for the sake of the economy, the environment and public health whilst also providing new housing.

The MHCLG is proposing that the Gardens Trust is demoted as a statutory consultee, with serious implications that include the loss of protection for the setting of historic parks and gardens. The intention is to streamline the planning application process, however this misconstrues how parks and gardens are protected and the expert advice needed on planning changes to these sites.

Local planning authorities do not hold parks and gardens expertise themselves and consult us on around 1800 planning applications annually. Even if they did have the capabilities in house, the cost for all local planning authorities to deliver the service currently provided by the Gardens Trust is estimated at a huge £3,692,846 annually. Our grant, from DCMS via Historic England, is currently c£45,000 annually.

Through our work, we ensure the nation's historic parks and gardens contribute to:

- Achieving growth and **resolving the housing crisis**, by supporting well-designed development with ready-made access to pre-existing greenspace.
- Driving the UK's **tourism** economy, nationally and internationally.
- Ameliorating the impacts of **climate change** and supporting nature recovery.
- **Social cohesion**, as places for communities to come together for wellbeing, play and recreation.
- Ensuring that the NHS is fit for the future, with free-to-access **places to exercise** and enjoy fresh air.

We very much look forward to working with you and your colleagues and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, perhaps in one of the famous Manchester parks? In the meantime, there is more detail at <https://thegardenstrust.org/support-us/consultation/>

Yours sincerely

John Watkins, Chair