



Reg Charity No 1013861 Company No 2723974

15 Village Gardens, Stafford, ST17 0LL

Planning Department
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Moorlands House
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffs, ST13 6HQ

Fao: Lisa Jackson

22 March 2022

Dear Sir

SMD/2022/0117

PROPOSED NEW FLIGHT OF STEPS, BIDDULPH GRANGE, GRANGE ROAD, BIDDULPH

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (TGT) in its role as Statutory Consultee over the proposed new flight of steps in Mrs Bateman's Garden, Biddulph Grange a site included at grade I on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens. Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust (SGPT) is a member organisation of TGT and works in partnership with it concerning the protection and conservation of registered sites. SGPT is authorised to respond on behalf of both Trusts in respect of planning consultations.

Biddulph Grange is a grade I registered historic landscape of mid 19th century date, within a designated conservation area. It is a site of international significance. The Grange itself is a grade II* listed building. The significance of the gardens derives in part from the survival of the carefully contrived landscape laid out between 1840 and 1865 by its owner James Bateman with assistance from the artist Edward Cooke, and in part from the eclectic selection of plants many being first time introductions to Great Britain. The gardens have been carefully restored or recreated in recent times by the National Trust and are now an important public attraction.

Ms Bateman's Garden is an integral part of the historic landscape and forms the frontispiece to the mansion house. It has been sympathetically reinstated by the National Trust over the last 30 years and comprises a sequence of small garden spaces enclosed by dense, tall hedges. The vista from the house terrace across the uniformly trimmed hedges is of an almost unbroken network of yew and appears as a deliberate design intention. There is currently little interconnection between the spaces and the impression within is comparable to being in a maze.

A key characteristic of Bateman's original layout is that most of the garden compartments are entered indirectly invoking a sense of fun, mystery and discovery as well as keeping their identities and micro-climates separate. For example entry to

China is through a tunnel from the Fernery; the Pinetum is entered through the Pyramid ; the Cheshire Cottage leads into Egypt.

The current application to cut form a new opening through the yew hedge will interrupt the visual continuity of the design and will also open a straight and obvious sightline down the perimeter of Mrs Bateman's Garden directly contradicting the design intention and philosophy of the original creators of the park. The design of the proposed steps with individual treads and risers is out of keeping with historic flights elsewhere in the park which have a single stone step. No information is provided about the proposed handrail.

The Trusts therefore **object** to both the principle and detail of this application which we consider will cause harm to the appearance and significance of this important historic landscape.

The applicants' Design and Access Statement explains that the desire for forming a new access is to make it easier for visitors to move around the site without retracing their steps. This is not a compelling reason for change. The DAS does not suggest there is a need to alleviate queuing or congestion. Should there be an overriding imperative to create a link between the two garden compartments the Trusts suggest an alternative and more discrete location be explored, for example behind the tall pyramidal yew abutting Mrs Bateman's Boudoir a rather unkempt area with exposed plumbing and unfinished masonry in need of tidying up.

Yours faithfully

Alan Taylor
Chairman SGPT

CC: Alison Allighan	TGT
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