

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0168
Valid 15/05/2024

BIDDULPH GRANGE
NATIONAL TRUST GRANGE
ROAD
BIDDULPH

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT
FOR INSTALLATION OF
WROUGHT IRON
BALUSTRADE RAILING
AROUND THE INTERNAL
PERIMETER OF THE EXISTING
BANDSTAND AND CREATION
OF A NEW SECTION OF
STEPS TO CONNECT THE
PARTERRE AREA OF THE
GARDEN TO MRS BATEMAN'S
GARDEN.

(LISTED BUILDING CONSENT -
ALTERATION)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the significance of a designated heritage asset

In determining this application consideration is made of the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. You should bear in mind section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Biddulph Grange Garden is a Grade II* listed building set within a Grade I Registered Park and Garden. The exceptional significance of the park and garden is recognised by its inclusion at Grade I in the register of historic parks and gardens. The headline description is "Gardens and pleasure grounds of 1840s-60s, with discrete 'world gardens' including China and Egypt, associated with a country house". The garden also has significance as part of the setting of the house and other listed buildings.

This application covers two distinct areas of Biddulph Grange Garden. The bandstand and steps.

The Bandstand

The bandstand is situated at the end of the terrace which runs adjacent to the west elevation of the main house and overlooks the garden from an elevated position.



The lawned areas either side of the terrace leading up to the Bandstand are utilised for external seating areas for visitors as outside seating near to the tea rooms. The areas immediately adjacent to the Bandstand to the west and south are heavily planted with large evergreen shrubs and trees. Due to the raised position of the Bandstand, there are considerable drops on the west, east and south elevations as shown on the supporting drawings. These drops range from 1 metre to just over 4 metres.

The bandstand is part of the Grade II listed arbour and seat. First listed in 1987, the description has not been updated subsequently. The description is for “seating, enclosure, platform and seat. Circa 1860 by John Bateman. Sandstone. Rectangular enclosure approximately 8m x 4m formed by ashlar plinth entered to north-west side; stone seat with panelled back set to south side. The enclosure is set above and to the west of the steps (q.v.) starting the perambulation of the gardens. It is the ideal and possibly intended position for viewing the layout, especially the Egyptian portal (q.v.)”.

The steps

The area in question is between the Parterre and Mrs Bateman’s Garden. It is situated at the end of a terrace which runs adjacent to the east elevation of the main house and Mrs Bateman’s Garden overlooks the rest of the gardens from an elevated position. The gardens on both the upper and lower areas of the site end in ‘dead ends’ rather than progressing into another part of the garden.



The Parterre is significant as a survival from the Bateman period of the gardens and was a likely starting point for his walks around the garden. Mrs Bateman's Garden is a small terrace which gives a new standpoint for looking at other parts of the grounds.

PROPOSAL

This application seeks to clarify and unite the intention of applications SMD/2020/0004, SMD/2020/0005, SMD/2021/0827 and SMD/2022/0117 which have all been withdrawn to allow for consideration of this one application with revised designs that address the concerns various stakeholders have raised including Historic England, Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust, the Conservation Officer at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, the Victorian Society and Biddulph Town Council. This application includes a Design and Access statement and a Heritage statement.

The Band Stand

The proposal is to install railings around the enclosure of the bandstand to make it a safe area for visitors to use and view the gardens.

The application proposes a revised design which follows three previous design attempts and consultation with SMDC conservation officer and Historic England.

This design is based on the railings on Congleton Road, Biddulph, outside what was the school built by John Bateman and they echo the details of the Lime Walk gates. They will be painted in Biddulph site green paint (RAL 6012) with no features picked out, so that they remain as recessive as possible whilst meeting health and safety requirements.

The railings would follow the recess of the south parapet rather than continuing straight across. Railings and posts in the recess would rest on the stone slab rather than being fixed to it but the posts at the return would be attached to the stone slab for stability. The railings would guard all areas where the parapet is above a significant drop and would be taken to the nearest logical stopping point beyond: the north west corner of the Arbour and where the parapet wall of the West Terrace meets the Arbour.

Earlier proposals included a concrete raft across the Arbour to address concerns about voids within the structure and to provide a firm foundation for the railings. Further consideration has enabled this to be reduced to a concrete strip. Other than where existing stone paving would be retained, the bandstand would be surfaced to match the west terrace.

The Steps

The proposal is to install a set of steps to improve access to both the Parterre and Mrs Bateman's Garden for the enjoyment of visitors.

The application proposes a revised design which follows previous design attempts and consultation with SMDC conservation officer and Historic England.

The design of the steps has been amended to include stone copings which will match other steps within the gardens. The steps will match other steps within the garden and the brick retaining walls to create the steps will be fully faced in stone so that they will match the stone within the immediate setting of the proposed steps.

The handrails are designed to match the handrails in other parts of the gardens, and particularly the style of the handrail leading to the café. The handrails on either side of the steps will protect against falls from height off the sides of the steps and these will match existing handrails elsewhere on the site. They will be painted in the Biddulph site green paint (RAL 6012) to blend into the evergreen hedge to either side of the steps.

Due to the addition of stone copings within this proposal, the handrails will now be fixed into the copings, in the same way they are fixed to the steps by the café. This eliminates the need for modern fixings and the handrails will now match the design of the steps by the café. The steps would be set back into the wall to reduce how much they protrude into the Parterre.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Area
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 Historic Environment

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2020/0004 Installation of glass balustrade to band stand. WITHDRAWN
SMD/2020/0005 (LBC) Installation of glass balustrade to band stand. WITHDRAWN
SMD/2021/0827 (LBC) Installation of wrought iron balustrade to band stand. WITHDRAWN.
SMD/2022/0117 (LBC) New section of steps to connect gardens. WITHDRAWN

The applications were withdrawn because they had become complex and potentially confusing with a number of iterations of the proposals. The intention of this application is to create a cohesive proposal for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and stakeholders to consider.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 9th July 2024
Neighbour consultation period ends: 9th July 2024
Press Advert: 19th June 2024

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council: No objection. Support Approval.

Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust

No Objection. The Trusts accept that although the low perimeter wall to the bandstand is an integral part of its historic design it does present a potential health and safety hazard today given the increased usage by visitors. While the introduction of a safety handrail will represent a departure from the historic design of this feature the benefit of allowing public access while minimising risk of accidents is considered to outweigh the minor degree of harm arising from the proposed change. The design and colour scheme of the proposed railings has evolved after extensive discussion with the Trusts and is considered sensitive to its setting.

Mrs Bateman's Garden forms the frontispiece to the mansion house. The detailed research paper prepared by the applicants and included in their Heritage Statement demonstrates clearly that the layout of this part of the historic landscape has changed several times over the years and that the present layout introduced by the National Trust in the 1990, while reflecting the spirit of earlier designs, is an evolution and not a replication of any single earlier design. In the light of this evidence it is not considered the proposed works will cause harm to the significance of the RPG and that the proposed change will enable improved visitor circulation within the park.

Historic England

We are content that the amended proposals have addressed our concerns regarding the previously proposed polyester powder coating finish which is now proposed to be painted in keeping with finished on the historic metalwork within the garden. There will still be a degree of visual intrusion, with an impact on views from the lime avenue toward the stone seat and bandstand above, in particular, with approximately half the height of the railings visible above the stone plinth. This will result in a degree of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Garden I registered park and garden, and the Grade II bandstand (Stone seat and arbour in lime walk approximately 15 metres south of Biddulph Grange), however the need to guard from a fall is recognised. We are content that the amended proposals have addressed our concerns regarding the proposed step details. There will still be a degree of visual intrusion, with an impact on views and change in experience, from within the lower and upper Mrs Bateman's garden as well as the loss of a section of yew hedge. This will result in a degree of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Garden I registered park and garden.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. You should bear in mind section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the significance of the heritage assets

Historic England and The Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust have both been consulted in these regards and confirm that they have no objection.

Amended proposals have addressed concerns regarding the previously proposed polyester powder coating finish which is now proposed to be painted in keeping with finished on the historic metalwork within the garden. There would still be a degree of visual intrusion, with an impact on views from the lime avenue toward the stone seat and bandstand above, in particular, with approximately half the height of the railings visible above the stone plinth. This would result in a degree of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Garden I registered park and garden, and the Grade II bandstand (Stone seat and arbour in lime walk approximately 15 metres south of Biddulph Grange), however the need to guard from a fall and the other benefits associated with the scheme identified by the applicant in their statements outweigh that harm.

The amended proposals have addressed concerns regarding the proposed step details. There would still be a degree of visual intrusion, with an impact on views and change in experience, from within the lower and upper Mrs Bateman's garden as well as the loss of a section of yew hedge. This will result in a degree of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Garden I registered park and garden, however, the public benefits identified – relating to that improved enjoyment, safety and experience of visitors outweigh that harm.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets with public benefits that outweigh that harm. No conflict with Local Plan Policy DC2 or the terms of the NPPF in those regards.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 10/07/2024

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

