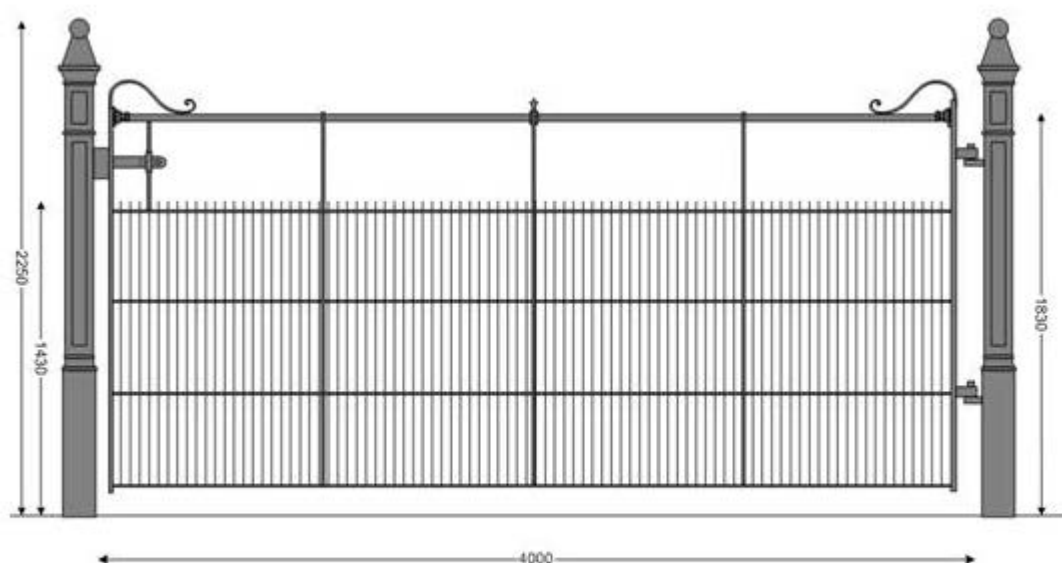




National  
Trust

## Biddulph Grange Garden

### Garden tractor access gate



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## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT Including Heritage Statement and Green Belt Justification

November 2014

## Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities Design and Access Statement

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement accompanies an application to install a new gate at Biddulph Grange Garden. The proposed gate would be located in the existing holly hedge at the top of the car park. It would give improved access to the rear garden drive for the tractor which is used by the gardeners.
- 1.2 This statement shows how the context has been appraised. It explains the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the amount, layout, scale, landscaping, appearance and duration of the proposed development, together with the alternatives considered. It also shows how all users will have equal and convenient access to the building and surrounding spaces.
- 1.3 The statement also provides a description of the significance of the relevant heritage assets and an assessment of the impact of the proposal, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.4 It also considers the justification for development in the green belt.

### **2. National Trust at Biddulph Grange**

- 2.1 The National Trust acquired the Biddulph Grange Garden in 1988. It then carried out its largest ever garden restoration project. The aim was to re-instate Bateman's original garden through extensive research, and following, in particular, Edward Kemp's two articles in the Horticulture Week of 1856 and 1862.
- 2.2 The Garden was opened to the public in 1991. It welcomed over 100,000 visitors in each of its first three years. Subsequently, annual visitor numbers dipped to around 57-67,000 but have now increased to over 80,000 following a move to year-round opening.
- 2.3 The National Trust currently employs 11 permanent staff at the Garden: 4 part time and 7 full time. Staffing is supplemented by the employment of part-time seasonal staff numbering 13. All employees live in the local area.
- 2.4 The management and presentation of the garden is a major operation which requires the use of substantial garden machinery as well as the movement of large quantities of garden materials such as compost and bedding plants.
- 2.5 The rear garden drive is part of the route the gardeners use to pass between their operational base at the nursery and the main garden areas.
- 2.6 The gardeners currently access the existing gate used by visitors, also the plant centre shop is situated opposite the gate where visitors gather in this area. It does create a problem with the safety of our visitors and any visitors in wheel chairs have to cross the road behind

## Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities Design and Access Statement

the gate on to the garden drive. The new gate would keep us separate from visitors leaving and entering the garden, also Visitors in wheelchairs will be able to cross the garden drive and continue along the driveway by the security fence leaving plenty of room for garden machinery.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1 The application site is on the edge of the existing tarmac car park for Biddulph Grange Garden. The car park dates to the restoration of garden in the late 1980s and its opening to the public in 1991.
- 3.2 The holly hedge in which the gate is proposed forms the northern boundary of the car park. On the other side of the hedge is a service track that was formerly a toll road. The hedge dates from the creation of the car park and follows a historic boundary line.
- 3.3 Biddulph Grange and its formal garden are on the far side of the service track/toll road. The Grange is raised above the car park on a terrace that has a stone retaining wall topped by a yew hedge. The formal garden and car park are well screened from each other by the holly hedge and screen planting on the edge of the garden.



**The hedge from the car park, with Biddulph Grange to the left**

- 3.4 A small part of Biddulph Grange is owned and occupied by the National Trust. This provides a tea room, toilets, shop and offices. The remainder of the building has been converted to apartments that are privately owned and occupied.
- 3.5 The churchyard of St Lawrence's Church, to the south, is separated from our car park by grassed areas, a hedge and trees. To the west, the private sewage treatment works serving the Grange and neighbouring housing development, is surrounded by trees.

## Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities Design and Access Statement

- 3.6 Woodland north of the car park is owned and managed by the Trust. Our visitor reception building facing onto the car park has recently been built on the edge of this area.

### 4. Historic Environment

- 4.1 Biddulph Grange is listed grade II\* and several structures within the garden are individually listed grade II. The Grange itself largely dates from 1897, following a serious fire which destroyed most of the building that had previously been created by Bateman: only the outer wings of the earlier building now survive. The Grange remained a house until 1924 and was then a hospital until 1988.
- 4.2 Biddulph Grange Garden is a grade I registered historic park and garden. The registered area amounts to 42ha and includes the park and grounds as well as the garden. The application site lies within the registered area. The register entry summarises it as, "Gardens and pleasure grounds of 1840s-60s, with discrete 'world gardens' including China and Egypt, associated with a country house."



- 4.3 The garden's inspired design was the vision of one man, James Bateman, who created the garden from 1841 to 1868, with the wealth he inherited from local family mining interests. He was assisted in this by Edward Cooke, a well respected, marine painter, who designed the buildings and rockwork. James' wife Maria was also influential and an active gardener; who had a particular interest in herbaceous plants, bulbs, Fuchsia's and Lilies.

## Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities Design and Access Statement

- 4.4 James Bateman was a distinguished botanist, plant collector and garden designer, but above all a horticulturist, with a great knowledge of plants and the conditions they require to grow in. He was also a part of the horticultural world, and being a fellow of the Royal Society, he would have had numerous contacts and influences. He created a series of garden rooms, many based on individual countries and with unique features, each with their own character and micro-climate in which he grew an exceptionally wide range of plants which were being introduced from all over the world.
- 4.5 The imaginative series of garden spaces are linked with considerable ingenuity and provide surprises at every turn. Terracing, hedging, stumps, roots, rockwork and earth mounding create a unified layout ingeniously separating these spaces. To retain a natural feel to the garden native Ivy, Yew and Holly have been used to screen each area and provide shelter, the contemporary critic Kemp said, "They alone contribute very largely to impart a natural and furnished appearance to the place."
- 4.6 The service road crossing the site is a former toll road shown as "High Road" in Kemp's 1862 plan of the garden. This marked the historic western boundary between the gardens and the grounds. The area west of the road was not part of the formal gardens, which are the primary interest at Biddulph Grange Garden. The area was heavily modified during the time that the Grange was in hospital use and has been modified subsequently with the introduction of the car park and sewage works.
- 4.7 St Lawrence's Church is listed grade II\* with related buildings and structures individually listed grade II.
- 4.8 The site lies within the Biddulph Grange Conservation Area. The Conservation Area appraisal produced by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council shows that the conservation interest is focused on the garden and pleasure grounds of Biddulph Grange.
- 4.9 The gate will require minimal ground penetration in areas that have already been disturbed by the creation of the car park and by infrastructure associated with the former hospital use of the site. Nothing of archaeological interest is likely to be affected by the development.

## **5. Heritage impacts**

- 5.1 The proposed gate would be seen in views of the Grange from the car park. The gate would have no direct effect on the Grange but represents an alteration to the setting. The style and finish of the proposed gate draws on existing metalwork at Biddulph Grange. It is considered that the gate would be a minor alteration that would preserve the setting of the listed building and would not detract in any way from its heritage significance.

## Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities Design and Access Statement

5.2 The toll road is an undesignated heritage asset that contributes to the conservation area. It was a factor in the layout of the historic park and garden. The hedge is a modern treatment of a historic boundary line. The proposed gate retains the line of that boundary and is appropriate in style to this location. It is considered that the gate would represent a slight change that would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and not harm the heritage significance of the toll road.

5.3 The gate is proposed within the registered historic park and garden in an area that was never part of the formal grounds, which was heavily modified as part of the hospital development and which now serves as a car park. The holly hedge is a modern intervention that marks a historic boundary. The proposed gate would perpetuate the historic boundary in a manner consistent with the style and period of the creation of the gardens and the status of this area within the overall design. Screening between the formal gardens and car park would continue to be provided by planting on the edge of the formal gardens. It is considered that it would have no adverse effect on the heritage significance of the registered park and garden.

### **6. Trees, hedges and nature conservation**

6.1 No trees are affected by the proposed gate. A short length of holly hedge would be removed. The removal would be undertaken outside the nesting season.

6.2 Ponds near Biddulph Grange Garden are known to support populations of Great Crested Newts. The application site comprises a holly hedge on the edge of an existing tarmac car park. It would have no effect on the newt population.

6.3 The species composition of the hedge makes the proposed removal unlikely to have any effect on bats.

### **7. Planning policy context**

7.1 The development plan for the area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy.

7.2 Biddulph Grange Garden lies entirely within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

7.3 The following policies are considered potentially relevant

- SS1 development principles
- SS1a presumption in favour of sustainable development
- SS5b Biddulph Area Strategy
- SS6c other rural areas strategy
- SD1 sustainable use of resources
- DC1 design considerations
- DC2 the historic environment

## Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities Design and Access Statement

- R1 rural diversification
- T2 other sustainable transport measures

### **8. National policy**

#### **a) General approach**

8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the government's policies for planning. Paragraph 6 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 7 sets out the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

8.2 Paragraph 14 states that for decision-taking the presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

8.3 Paragraph 17 sets out twelve core planning principles.

#### **b) Green belts**

8.4 National planning policy in relation to green belts is set out in chapter 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

8.5 Paragraph 80 sets out the five purposes of green belt. These are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

8.6 Paragraph 81 states, "Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land."

8.7 Paragraph 87 states that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

8.8 Paragraph 88 states that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. "Very



Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities  
Design and Access Statement

special circumstances” will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

- 8.9 Paragraph 90 states that certain forms of development are not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These include engineering operations and local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a green belt location.

**c) Heritage assets**

- 8.10 Chapter 12 of the NPPF sets out the government’s objectives and planning policies for the historic environment.
- 8.11 Paragraph 128 requires applicants to provide a description of the significance of heritage assets affected by the proposals and the contribution of their setting to that significance. This should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset.
- 8.12 Paragraph 131 states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significant of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- 8.13 Paragraph 132 states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed through alteration of an asset or development within its setting. As assets are irreplaceable, any harm should require clear and convincing justification.
- 8.14 Paragraph 134 states that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 8.15 Paragraph 137 advises local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

**9. Green Belt justification**

- 9.1 The proposed gate does not obviously fall within any of the categories of development identified in paragraphs 89-90 of the NPPF as not being ‘inappropriate.’ The NPPG is silent on interpretation of



## Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities Design and Access Statement

inappropriate development and the various exceptions. All other relevant guidance has been cancelled.

- 9.2 As development within the curtilage of a building, the gate could be considered as analogous to an alteration or extension of the building. Given its function in support of tractor access to the garden, the gate might also be regarded as local transport infrastructure.
- 9.3 The gate would not cause any conflict with green belt purposes. Given its size and location, and the character of its surroundings, it would not have any material impact on the openness of the green belt.
- 9.4 The gate will enable more convenient access to and from the garden by the Trust's gardeners. It will support our ability to maintain Biddulph Grange Garden as a highly significant heritage asset and visitor attraction that contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of Staffordshire Moorlands.
- 9.5 The gate will also reduce the potential for conflict between visitors and the movement of the garden tractor and garden machinery.
- 9.6 Biddulph Grange Garden is wholly within the green belt. It would not be possible to achieve the same benefits through development that did not take place within the green belt. The style and location of the gate minimise impacts on the openness of the green belt.
- 9.7 It is considered that if the gate is considered as 'inappropriate development' it would be justified by the very special circumstances of the support it would provide to the National Trust's management of Biddulph Grange Garden as a heritage asset, a business providing local employment opportunities and a visitor attraction contributing to the local economy. It is also considered that the benefits of the development would clearly outweigh any harm.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1 The proposals have been discussed with Arne Swithinbank, the Council's Ecologist and Associate Planner. He has confirmed that the hedgerow removal would not require approval under the Hedgerow Regulations. While the gate would normally be permitted development, permission would be required in this instance because it is considered to be within the curtilage of a listed building.

## **11. Design Principles and Concepts**

- 11.1 The Trust's design objectives have been:
- to improve the safety and convenience of the gardeners' access to the rear drive;
  - to safeguard the significance of the historic park and garden, the listed buildings and conservation area;

Biddulph Grange Garden Visitor Facilities  
Design and Access Statement

- to avoid harm to the green belt;
- to avoid conflict with neighbours;
- to avoid harm to nature conservation interests.

**12. The amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of development**

- 12.1 The proposed development comprises a single metal gate 4m in length and 1.63m high, excluding decorative scrolls. It would be mounted on a pair of metal posts 2.25m high. The gate and posts would be painted dark green.
- 12.2 The gate would be set on the line of a holly hedge. A section of hedge would be removed to enable installation of the gate.
- 12.3 The gate has been designed to complement existing metalwork at Biddulph Grange and to be in keeping with the Victorian house and gardens. It has also been designed to discourage climbing, through the use of narrowly spaced uprights.
- 12.4 The access through the gate would be surfaced with stone to match the access road

**13. Access**

- 13.1 The proposed gate is intended only for use by the National Trust's gardeners. It is however capable of being used by almost anyone with any form of mental, physical or sensory disability.

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