

Statement

by

Stephan Green, MA, PhD

on behalf of

Derbyshire Historic Gardens Trust

and

The Gardens Trust

Land at Thornbridge Hall, Baslow Road, Ashford-in-the-Water, DE45 1NZ

Planning Inspectorate Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/C/21/3279072

Introduction

I am Glyn Stephan Green, a member of The Gardens Trust, committee member of Derbyshire Historic Gardens Trust and Trustee of Nottinghamshire Gardens Trust.

Although my academic qualifications were gained in science and engineering I have, since a young age, taken a very keen interest in landscape history and the broader interaction between humanity and the natural world.

My professional experience was initially as an academic physicist. That was followed by a period providing academic support in higher education. I later worked on website and database design, development & maintenance, in both the private and public sectors. For the ten years or so leading up to my recent retirement I specialised in the processing and analysis of primary healthcare data, working at the University of Nottingham and then NHS Nottingham & Nottinghamshire.

I have pursued archival research and fieldwork in local history for fifty years. I have undertaken voluntary work in the maintenance and restoration of historic gardens and landscapes for the National Trust, National Trust for Scotland and The Conservation Volunteers. I have also taken part as a volunteer on archaeological investigations with the National Trust for Scotland, Snowdonia National Park and Mercian Archaeology.

I also take an active interest in the work of the Ancient Tree Forum. It has no membership but I am a subscriber and attend events when possible.

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee in respect of planning applications that might affect sites listed by Historic England on their Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. As well as having individual members, the Gardens Trust serves as an umbrella organisation for national and county trusts. Derbyshire Historic Gardens Trust is an organisational member of the Gardens Trust; we work closely with the Gardens Trust's conservation team, providing local support on cases within the county.

Background

We acknowledge the very substantial efforts that have been made by the current owners to preserve and enhance Thornbridge Hall and its historic gardens. We applaud and support their desire to provide a sustainable long term future for the estate, and to expand public access.

We do have concerns about the appeal scheme but we would hope that, whatever the outcome of this appeal, a Conservation Management Plan will be developed and we would welcome the opportunity to advise or support that endeavour in so far as our resources allow.

Gardens Trust Comments, Dec 2021

Ms Payne has commented, in paragraph 3.31 of her Proof of Evidence (p13), on the GT document dated 23rd December 2021. We respond as follows:

- we concur that paragraph 202 is relevant where there is less than substantial harm;
- we understand that the online documents referred to were those available on the planning authority's web portal at the time that the response was written;
- we believe that it is clear from the document that we placed no reliance whatsoever on information published by the press, rather that it provided useful background to those colleagues who were unable to visit the site in person.

Ancient and Veteran Trees

With reference to paragraph 4.2 of Mr Anderson's Proof of Evidence, which discusses interest in ancient trees, I draw attention to the work of Major Hayman Rooke in the eighteenth century.

After a modest military career, in which he achieved the rank of major, he retired to Mansfield Woodhouse in Nottinghamshire. He became an antiquary, and was a pioneer archaeologist within the East Midlands. He wrote about local great estates such as Welbeck, Bolsover, Haddon Hall and Thoresby. He also sketched and wrote about ancient and veteran trees. The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest is named in his honour and in recognition of his writings and his love of the Forest.

In 2019 a book was published about Rooke, *The Landscape Studies of Hayman Rooke (1723-1806): Antiquarianism, Archaeology and Natural History in the Eighteenth Century*. It was written by Emily Sloan, based on her University of Nottingham PhD thesis.

Impact of the Development

The effect of **driveway A** and the **car park** is to disrupt sweeping views within and across the parkland, distracting the eye from both the natural and the historic designed landscapes. They have also had a deleterious effect on views into the designed landscape from the Monsal Trail and from the footpath alongside the A6020. The negative impact is particularly noticeable from the south terrace of the hall looking towards the boating lake and the East (or South) Lodge. Views across the parkland from the public footpath have also been significantly damaged, especially the view northwards towards the hall from the southerly end of the footpath.

We consider that these elements of the development have a major negative impact on the RPG and a moderate negative impact on Thornbridge Hall.

We believe that the design of the **café** is unsympathetic to its surroundings, and that its siting is inappropriate. Ms Payne states in paragraph 7.42 of her Proof of Evidence that "*the café location was selected as it is sited away from any monuments/statues and trees*". It is in fact located very close to one of the temples and to the ornamental fountain, both of which are listed.

By virtue of its effect on their settings, we believe that the **café** development has resulted in a moderate negative impact on the listed temples and the listed fountain, and a minor negative impact on the listed hermes and on Thornbridge Hall itself.

The development in the vicinity of the **café** may be seen in Figures 1-4 below, which have been arranged as far as is possible in chronological sequence of original image date.

Figure 1 shows the site before any significant development work had been undertaken. The large rectangular grassed area seems to correlate well with the area clearly shown on the 1922 OS map (figure 3c in the Appendices to Ms Sather's Proof of Evidence) and later plans.

Paragraph 149 of Ms Sather's Proof of Evidence (p63) states that "*the tarmacking of the Service Road from the Café area to the Car Park affects a previously unmade track, part in the service area and part through a wooded area largely outside the garden but within the park. The paved surface is a very slight change to the strip of woodland and service area, neither of which are key landscape elements or structural design elements. The work is assessed as a neutral impact to the registered park and garden*".

There is no visible evidence in figures 1 and 2 of any vehicular access route towards the east into the woodland from the garden area. Such a route is visible in figure 3, so it would appear only to have come into existence at some time after April 2020. Fig 4 shows the full extent of the development.

The planning permission for the tennis court and pavilion granted in 2005 & 2010 would have obstructed such an access route had it existed yet the plans do not indicate any alternative route, therefore confirming the suggestion that no such route was in existence at that time.

However, **driveway B** passes very close to both listed temples and it is clearly visible from the garden area. By virtue of its effect on their settings, we believe that this element of the development has resulted in a further moderate negative impact on the listed temples.

It is our opinion that, overall, the **café** and **driveway B** have caused a moderate to major negative impact on the listed temples.

Conclusion

We do not believe there is sufficient evidence to support the need for **driveway B**. Given the modest amount of delivery traffic and numbers of disabled visitors, access should be possible via the historic drive.

We submit, therefore, that permission for **driveway B** should be refused regardless of the outcome of the appeal in respect of the rest of the development.

Removal of driveway B would allow the **café** to be relocated closer to the railway line, further from the listed garden buildings & structures, in roughly the same location as the sports pavilion for which permission was granted in 2005 & 2010. A design closer in appearance to that pavilion would be more in keeping with the country house aesthetic than the present building.

We suggest that should permission for the **café** be granted, it should be a temporary permission that allows time for the drawing up of plans for a more suitably designed and located permanent structure.

We remain troubled by **driveway A** and the **car park**, and we do not feel that the proposed mitigation measures would sufficiently reduce their negative impact.

We would have expected to see a Conservation Management Plan in advance of the development but we accept that this omission could be taken into account through a condition requiring a CMP to be produced that is acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

We have serious concerns with regard to planned future development on the site. Paragraph 5.3 of Ms Payne's Proof of Evidence describes imminent developments, including art and craft workshops, "*to ensure the longevity of the Hall and grounds*".

Our main concern is that should the appeal scheme be granted permission, we would find ourselves in the relatively short term being faced with another planning application that is essential for longer term sustainability but which would cause further harm to the RPG and other historic assets.

We would have been much more comfortable had those further development proposals been included as part of the appeal scheme. In the absence of detailed proposals, we would expect to see a robust business strategy that demonstrates precisely what is likely to be required both now and in

the future over the short and medium term in order to fund the long term care, upkeep and development of the estate.

We recognise that the appeal scheme brings numerous public benefits. We do not, however, entirely agree with the weight that the appellant has attributed to those benefits. We also consider that the appeal scheme introduces a significantly greater level of harm than was identified by the appellant.

It is our considered opinion that, taking into account the numerous public benefits that the appeal scheme provides together with the harm caused to the historic landscape and other assets, the benefits do not outweigh the harm, although the balance is fine.

We therefore submit that permission for the appeal scheme in its present form, and in particular for **driveway A** and the **car park**, be refused.

We suggest that should permission for a car park be granted then rather than being laid to tarmac it should have a much more permeable surface.

We respectfully submit that the appeal should fail.



Figure 1: Bing Maps Aerial View, image undated but prior to Dec 2021 (accessed online in Dec 2021).

This image appears to date from before the unauthorised development was started.



Figure 2: Google Earth image, dated '24/4/20 or newer' (accessed online in March 2022 but image prior to Dec 2021).

NB The white, orange and yellow lines and the grey shading are to be ignored.

This image shows a very early stage of the unauthorised development, with some works visibly encroaching onto the SW corner of the rectangular grassed area.

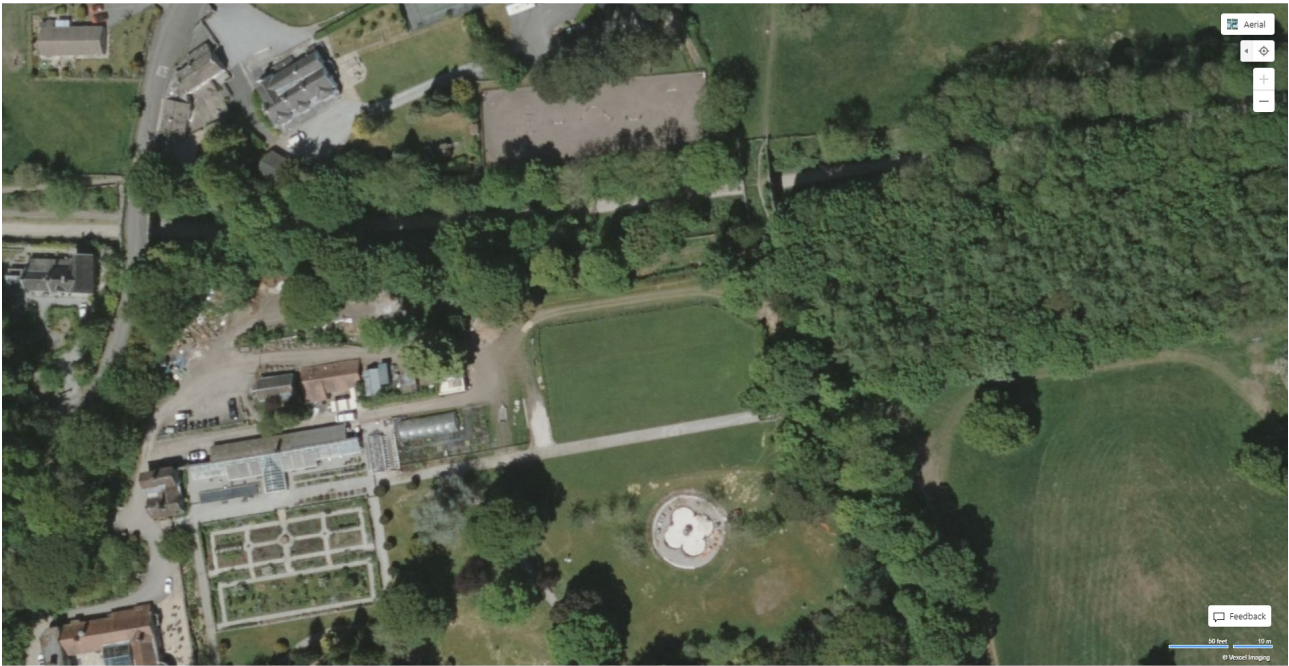


Figure 3: Bing Maps Aerial View, image undated (accessed online in October 2022).

This image dates from prior to Dec 2021. It shows a slightly more advanced stage of the development than figure 2, with a new access track clearly visible across the N side of the rectangular grassed area and possibly in the woods to its east.

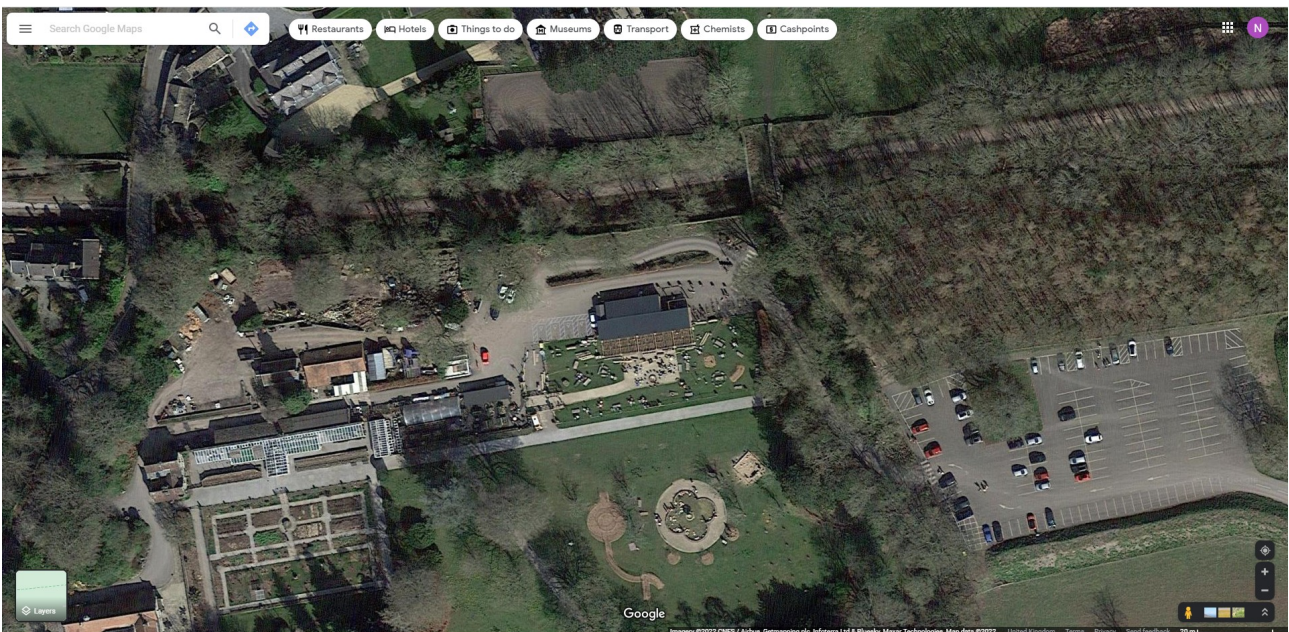


Figure 4: Google Maps Aerial View, image undated (accessed online in October 2022).

This image shows willow sculptures and new orchard planting not present in Dec 2021, believed to have been created in Spring 2022).