



5.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

View to the Stable Block



## 5.1 METHODOLOGY

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The aim of any heritage assessment is to demonstrate the understanding of the significance of the relevant heritage assets and specific values which contribute to that significance, the extent of the building and landscape fabric that holds this interest and its comparative level of importance.

The NPPF provides a definition of Archaeological Interest imbued in a heritage asset as:

*There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.*

Guidance on what constitutes architectural, artistic, historic and social values can be drawn from Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance published by English Heritage (2008).

In addition the statutory listing criteria used for the selection of buildings of special interest provided definitions of architectural and historic interest, as follows:

*Architectural Interest - To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;*

*Historic Interest - To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural, or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people. There should normally be some quality of interest in the physical fabric of the building itself to justify the statutory protection afforded by listing.*

The works proposed on the landscape and its features fall into the category of restoration. These works will be designed to acknowledge and satisfy the following criteria set out in *English Heritage Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance*. For restoration projects, *Conservation Principles* states that:

*Restoration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:*

- *the heritage values of the elements that would be restored decisively outweigh the values of those that would be lost;*
- *the work proposed is justified by compelling evidence of the evolution of the place, and is executed in accordance of that evidence;*
- *the form in which the place currently exists is not the result of an historically-significant event;*
- *the work proposed respects previous forms of the place;*
- *the maintenance implications of the proposed restoration are considered to be sustainable.*

The setting of a heritage asset is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

*The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surrounding evolve. Elements of setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.*

*The Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning – Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*, published by English Heritage in March 2015 (now Historic England) provides a five step approach for assessing the impact of a development proposal on the setting of a heritage asset, as follows:

1. *Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;*
2. *Assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);*
3. *Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance;*
4. *Explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm;*
5. *Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.*

## 5.2 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

### ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

This chapter sets out an impact assessment of development proposed at Marble Hill on the identified heritage assets. It considers the significance of the heritage assets, their sensitivity in respect of the proposed works and the potential impact on this significance and the contribution made by their setting.

#### Impact on the Setting of Built Heritage Assets

Marble Hill park is a grade II\* Registered Park and Garden and built heritage assets in the park include Marble Hill House (grade I), Stable Block (grade II), White Lodge (grade II), Ice House (grade II). The reconstructed Grotto retains some of the original features, mostly at ground level but has not been sympathetically restored. It can be considered to retain some of the historical and evidential values.

The park is located within Twickenham Riverside Conservation Area. There are numerous heritage assets in Montpellier Row, which form one of the key elements of the character of the Conservation Area. The view from Richmond Hill is protected by the 1902 Act of Parliament. The vistas from Marble Hill House to the Thames Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation are also protected by Thames Landscape Strategy.

The proposed development envisages restoration of historic landscape and built parkland features as shown on the 1752 plan and based on contemporary examples. These include flower garden, orchard, grove and trees planting and new paths, a tree-planted arborial palisade, a hippodrome-like feature, sharpening of the terraces, nine pin bowling alley, interactive play features in form of beehives, new hedging and railing on the line of historic fence and ha-ha and delineating the historic quarters and character areas (for details of proposals see chapter 3 and 4). The proposal includes two non-historic features – a new children play area and a site for a marquee to be erected for 12 events per year (for details refer to chapter 4). It is also proposed to demolish the disused toilet block and Chinese-Style shelter, two modern structures of no architectural or historic merit.

The proposed development will impact directly upon the heritage assets within the park, the appearance and character of the registered park itself as well as on the character of the Conservation Area. Due to the low-scale of the new features will not impact on the heritage assets in Montpellier Row but initially the landscaping works designed

to restore the Sweet Walk may impact on the screening of the houses from the park.

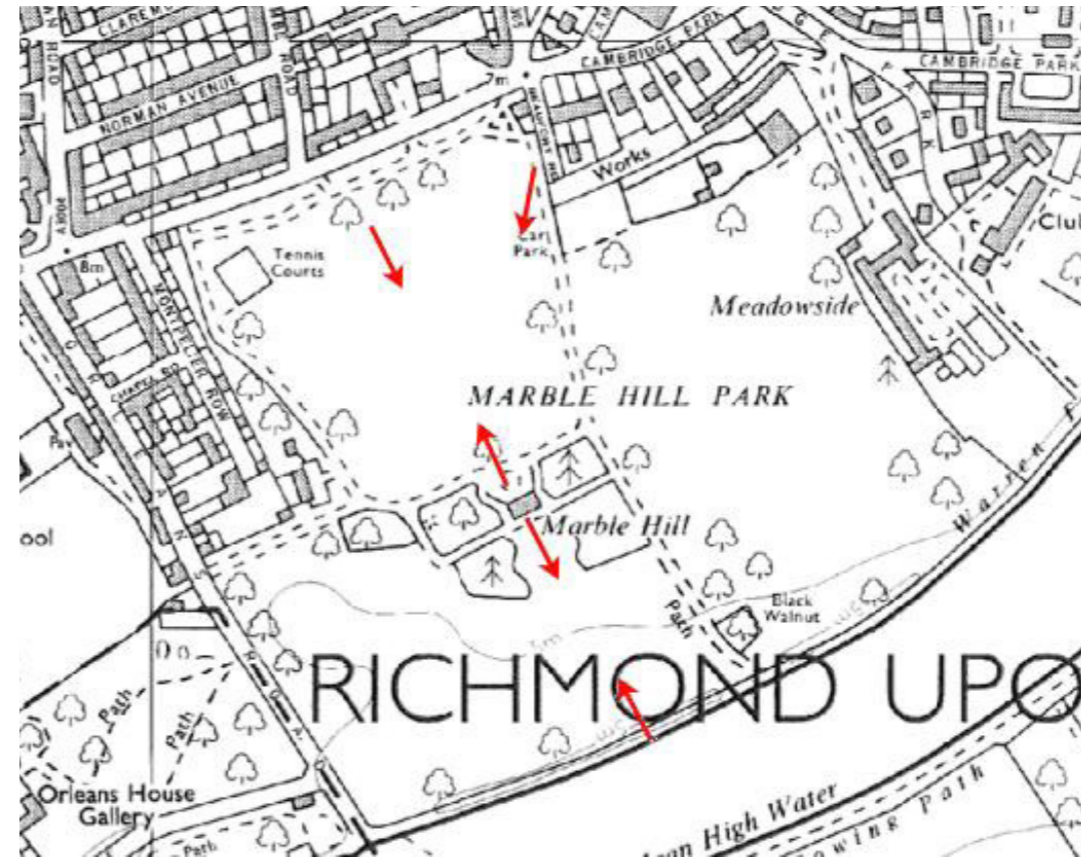
As such consideration of impacts can be set out having regard to the five step methodology set out within Historic England guidance on the setting of heritage assets (see Policy Framework section above). This is undertaken in respect of Steps 2, 3 and 4 below.

Assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset

Marble Hill has been distinguished by national and local designations as an outstanding example of historic development along the Thames and of Georgian and Neo-Palladian approach to integrated landscape and building design. 18th-century designers and patrons developed their estate as coherent microsystems where a garden complemented the buildings and the internal layout of a house affected the approach to the layout of the surrounding landscape. In the light of this the relationship between the landscape and built features is one of the key elements to understanding of the heritage significance of Marble Hill. But due to neglect and decay, the landscape element of this integrated approach has eroded significantly and this has undermined the heritage significance of the place. The views in and out of Marble Hill were integral and important part of the design of the estate. They were arranged to show the buildings to their best advantage and emphasise the status, wealth and taste of the owner. These views and vistas are therefore an important element of the setting. According to the Conservation Area Statement buildings at Marble Hill “also have a strategic role in visually linking up with other houses in the area such as Ham House and Strawberry Hill and viewpoints such as Richmond Hill. (...) Trees play an important role in framing views and providing the setting to the buildings.”

The significance of the views and viewpoints has been to certain extent diminished by overgrown vegetation and unsympathetic street furniture, and to a large extent by the loss of the historic designed – built and landscape - features.

Marble Hill as a place, due to its high historic, aesthetic, natural and social values makes a positive contribution to the character and setting of Twickenham Riverside Conservation Area.



Key views to and from Marble Hill House

*Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance.*

As the restoration recreates a large part of the 18th century landscape, the House, the Grotto and the Ice House will once again be seen, appreciated and understood in their historic context. Because of this the proposal will enhance the evidential, historic and educational values of Marble Hill as a heritage asset.

#### **New Interpretation**

The new interpretation will include orientation and feature panels as well as decorative frames which will frame the most significant, historic views to highlight and explain their importance (see full Interpretation Scheme Design at Appendix 8.4). These elements will be low-key and non-intrusive in the landscape and having a negligible impact on the setting of the historic buildings. They will improve the understanding, knowledge and enjoyment of the park. They will therefore enhance the educational, evidential and historical values of Marble Hill as the heritage asset.

#### **Sweet Walk**

Initially the replanting within Sweet Walk may impact the screening of the houses along Montpelier Row from the park. However, this will thicken and improve while new planting is established and mature. New planting in this area will be informed by through archival and archaeological research so overall the long-term impact of the development will be positive and enhance the evidential and aesthetic values of Marble Hill while having a neutral effect on the significance of the heritage assets in Montpelier Row.

#### **The Ice House**

The Ice House will be re-interpreted with the use of a new panel mounted on railings as well as interpretation embedded in the new seat. The seat will be modelled on historic, period style park furniture and inspired by the 1752 plan of Marble Hill. It will replicate historic form and size and incorporate an interactive play element. It is therefore deemed that its installation will not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the heritage assets and enhance the educational and historical values of the place and its overall cultural significance.

Planting proposed on top of the Ice House will also follow historic precedence and have been informed by thorough, archival research. Plants will be carefully chosen to have shallow roots so as not to impact on the structural integrity of the House. It will therefore enhance the educational and

aesthetic values of the structure as a heritage asset while having no effect on its evidential values and fabric.

#### **New Play Area**

The new play area will be located slightly westwards of the existing fenced children area. Its design is interpretative inspired by the themes or design elements from the historic significance of the site including features alluding to the existence of the 18th century productive estate landscape. The play structures will be low-key and in natural materials in keeping with the organic setting of the park. The boundary treatment of this area will remain unchanged. This will allow for the area to be more sympathetically integrated into the park setting, reduce its visual impact and improve the historic integrity of the West Meadow while enhancing the setting of the grade II listed Stable Block.

As the installation aims to highlight that historically Marble Hill was more than just a cluster of isolated structures and functioned as a thriving and busy estate producing food and providing grazing for farm animals, the new play area will enhance the historical and educational values of the place. As it will provide high quality amenity for families, it will also enhance the communal value of the park as a heritage asset.

#### **Turning Circle**

The turning circle to the north of the House will be refurbished with materials of better quality and reflecting historic treatment. These changes will be cosmetic and as they are informed by research and in keeping with the character and style of the House it is deemed that they will enhance its aesthetic and evidential values as a heritage asset.

#### **Marquee**

It is proposed to establish anchor points for a marquee which will be erected in the woodland quarter to the east of the house to cater for 12 events per year. This is the site of the former service wing demolished in 1908 and the location is proposed because it has no history of designed landscape use, easy access to existing facilities within the house, and does not significantly detract from key views. The landscape proposals for this area mean that it will be screened from all angles by the existing sweep walls and the restoration of historic tree and shrub planting. All of these would have screened the service wing from view in the 18th century. The installation of a designated marquee site is central to the financial sustainability of the site through the increased potential for private hire. Through the introduction of an additional private hire space, it would also reduce the risk to

the interiors in the house (Grade I listed) which are vulnerable to accidental damage and 'wear and tear'.

Archaeological investigation of this area has increased our understanding of the depth, exact location and sensitivity of the surviving archaeology related to the former service wing. This has allowed for mitigation of any adverse impact in locating fixed anchor points and installing any necessary services.

The temporary and reversible nature of the marquee means that the impact of the structure on the setting of the House will be minimal.

#### **Disabled Ramp at the Sport Block**

New ramps at the Sport Block will be low-key in massing and scale and, as the building is modern and located in a remote corner of the park, this addition will not have an impact on the setting of any heritage assets.

#### **Disused Toilet Block**

The disused toilet block within the woodland block to the north-west of the house is a small modern utilitarian building which reinforces the unkempt appearance of the woodland. This feature is located within one of the most significant areas of the historic 18th-century landscape and therefore has a detrimental impact on the historic design intent of this area. Due to its lack of contemporary use and the proposed vision to restore this area of the landscape as much as possible to its 18th-century design and function it is proposed to demolish the toilet block. Its demolition will prevent an unacceptable visual intrusion within the landscape after the proposed landscape restoration and enhance the setting of Marble Hill House (Grade I listed).

#### **Chinese-style Shelter**

The Chinese-style shelter, located in the western area of the park, was built in c1972 by the Greater London Council. The shelter provides covered seating on a terrace where previously there had been only benches. The structure is in very poor condition and has been subjected to various acts of vandalism. It's current condition and style detracts from the significance of the landscape and contributes to the impression that this area is purely a municipal park rather than a historically important Grade II\* registered parkland. It is proposed to remove the structure and the base on which it sits. The shelter is located on the line of an 18th-century tree avenue shown on a survey from c1752 which denoted the outer edge of the garden. At the north end of the avenue the Ice House area was the focal point, giving this feature a prominent location within the design. The removal of the

shelter will allow this important design feature to be reinstated.

#### **Non-Historic Vegetation and Park Furniture**

The proposal will aim to clear some of the non-historic vegetation and incorporate a scheme of attractive, robust, good quality street furniture in non-intrusive positions and in keeping with the character of the place. This will have a positive effect on the views and vistas as identified in the Conservation Management Plan.

Overall, the proposed restoration will have a beneficial effect on the significance of the built heritage assets and their setting.

*Explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm;*

The proposed landscape restoration works will not cause harm to the heritage significance of the place and in order to maximise enhancement English Heritage has followed the guidance on restoration as set out in the Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance document of 2008.

No elements of heritage value will be lost as result of the landscape restoration works.

The works proposed are justified by compelling evidence of the evolution of the place, and will be executed based on that evidence.

The form in which Marble Hill currently exists is not the result of a historically-significant event and rather of on-going neglect ensuing from the misunderstanding of its significance and lack of investment.

The proposed works will respects all historic forms of the place and give due weight to the historic evolution of the estate. The maintenance implications of the proposed restoration are considered to be sustainable.



## 5.3 CONCLUSION

### CONCLUSION

The vision for the restoration of Marble Hill is to enhance its unique character while complimenting neighbouring parks, open spaces and the character of the conservation area. The proposed works will rejuvenate Henrietta Howard's 18th-century gardens and transform the park into a vibrant public space, enabling everyone to experience the pleasure Henrietta and her circle found there. The reintroduction of heritage features will create a diversity of spatial character and habitats within the park which it currently does not provide. We also aim to improve habitats and biodiversity and promote access to nature.

Overall, the proposal will strike a balance between the needs of conservation, biodiversity, access, the interests of the local community, the public benefits of a development and the sustainable economic use. In combination with our new volunteer programme, it will deliver a welcoming and inclusive environment, sustainable well beyond the funded lifecycle of the project.

It is therefore considered that the landscape restoration works carried out as part of the proposal will enhance the heritage significance of the all the assets in the park and those elements which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Twickenham Riverside Conservation Area will be preserved and enhanced. The proposal is thus in line with national and local policies set out in the NPPF and Richmond Borough Council Core Strategy and Development Management Plan.