

## 8.40 HISTORIC ENGLAND FORMAL FEEDBACK

Dr Agnieszka Sadraei  
3774  
English  
Heritage

Direct Dial: 020 7973

1 Waterhouse Square  
138-142  
Holborn  
London  
EC1N 2ST  
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Dear Dr Sadraei

### **Request for Pre-application Advice**

#### **MARBLE HILL HOUSE, TWICKENHAM**

Thank you for contacting us on regarding your proposals for the above site. These include the restoration of elements of the historic landscape; the proposal for a cafe in the rear yard of the stables; and minor works to the house for a lift. We have considered the proposals and can offer you the following pre-application advice.

#### **Advice**

##### *Significance*

The significance of Marble Hill House is well known and needn't be repeated in detail here. In summary, the house and landscape are fine examples of early 18th century Palladianism, and this is reflected in the high grade of listing. Henrietta Howard's garden (grade II\* registered) is a rare surviving example of an early 18th century villa landscape, bridging the gap between the formal gardens of the late 17th century and the landscape gardens of the mid-18th century. Key figures in the history of designed landscapes, including Charles Bridgeman and the poet Alexander Pope, played a part in the garden's creation. However, the landscape has been seriously degraded over the centuries. The house (1724-29, *Roger Morris*, grade I listed) is in relatively good condition and substantially intact. The stable building is listed separately at grade II and was constructed during the early 1827. It is a handsome symmetrical brick building with a central carriage arch, above which is a triangular pediment and timber belfry.

##### *Impact of the proposals*

The proposals are summarised as follows:

**Landscape:** the proposals for the restoration of the landscape appear to be informed by the detailed survey of 1752. The most significant parts of the designed landscape, around the house and between the house and the river, would be reinstated to closely resemble the original, now largely lost, landscape.

**Stables:** the proposals are for a cafe building along the rear wall of the stable yard. The building appears as a simple pavilion structure with a monopitch roof, with the existing boundary wall serving (rebuilt) as the rear wall of the new building. It will contain a kitchen, servery and cafe, with an associated terrace beneath the roof overhang.

**House:** the proposals are for a lift between the ground and first floors contained within a much altered former closet room (currently used as the Control Room), and for associated minor repairs and alterations.

#### *Policy context*

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals on listed buildings and registered landscapes and safeguard their special interest.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for decision making on development proposals. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development'. Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance forms one of the 12 core principles that define sustainable development.

Paragraph 131 advises local authorities to take account of the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 132 gives great weight to conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, noting that significance can be harmed by development within the setting of a heritage asset.

Paragraphs 133 and 134 advise on cases where proposals would lead to substantial or less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. In both cases, harm needs to be weighed against public benefits, although the tests in 133 for substantial harm are necessarily more rigorous.

#### *Historic England pre-application position*

We strongly support the principle of the restoration of the historic landscape, and believe the approach has been well-informed by the 1752 survey. In our view, the restoration could result in significant enhancement of the grade II\* registered landscape. We look forward to advising on detailed proposals once they emerge, but at this point we can confirm that, whilst we would support the installation of estate railings based on the historic land divisions at the south end of the pleasure grounds near the river, we would not support a fence or boundary treatment which does not align with those boundaries and is placed mid-way across the land south of the house and thereby impacting on the historic designed vista.

In terms of the stables cafe proposals, our formal locus is limited due to the grade II listing of the stables. We can, however, confirm that we have no objections to the approach, and any harm caused by the new building encroaching upon the setting of the stable building is minor and would be outweighed by the substantial public benefit of restoring the landscape and improving the site in general, all of which is contingent upon the provision of a high quality cafe offer. In that regard, the proposals accord with paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

The proposals could have a minor impact on the setting of the grade II\* listed South End House, as the curtilage boundary wall would require rebuilding to a greater height to accommodate the new cafe building. In our view, the wall here has been much altered and is in poor condition. Its significance lies in its role as boundary rather than in any intrinsic value in its (much altered) fabric. Any harm impact on the setting of South End House, would, in our view be decisively outweighed by the substantial public benefits set out previously, and could be mitigated by high quality rebuilding

using appropriate materials and craftsmanship. In that regard, the proposals would accord with paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

Finally, we have no objections to the proposals for a lift and minor alterations within the house itself, as these have no impact on areas of high significance.

**Recommendation**

We strongly support the principle of the proposals, and look forward to further details as the scheme progresses.

Thank you for involving us at the Pre-application stage. The above advice is the response that we would give if the same proposals were put forward unamended for statutory approval.

Yours sincerely

Michael Dunn  
Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas