

# The Marble Hill Society

Planning & Development Control Manager,  
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames,  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Civic Centre,  
York Street,  
Twickenham TW1 3BZ

1 October 2018

## **Marble Hill Restoration Project: planning application 18/2977/FUL**

I am writing on behalf of the Society to support this amended planning application submitted by English Heritage in respect of the exciting and ambitious £6mn investment project for Marble Hill House and Park, which was built for Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk, in the early 18C.

*The Marble Hill Society was founded in 1987 to bring together people with an interest in this historic, 18C Palladian Villa and Park and to help English Heritage preserve its history and enhance its amenities. The Society provides volunteer guides for the House, has a regular Newsletter, and holds talks, entertainments and themed visits in the House for members and guests (see [www.marblehillsociety.org.uk](http://www.marblehillsociety.org.uk))*

Following the withdrawal of the earlier planning application in February, EH staff have carried out a comprehensive and informative consultation and engagement programme specifically to address the concerns raised by some local residents. We would like to pay tribute to Alex Sydney (Head of Investment & Involvement) and Kate Pitt (Audience Development Manager) for overseeing this, and to thank all the other EH staff involved. One of the most engaging events was a special symposium on 20 June on the proposals for recreating Henrietta's 18C Pleasure Garden, which explored the detailed historical and recent evidence for the woodland quarters, terraces, lawn, flower garden, grotto and other features like the ninepin alley and ice-house – including a particularly impressive and convincing presentation by Dr Emily Parker (EH Landscape Adviser for Marble Hill): based on a c1749 plan, the transitional style of Henrietta's garden marked a key stage in the development of garden design which evolved into the "English Landscape Movement". Another was the Landscape Workshop on 12 May which highlighted the enormous untapped potential of Marble Hill – if proactively managed and improved – for increasing biodiversity by providing attractive habitats for more species of butterflies and bats, for stag beetles and owls, wildflowers, insects and song-birds and much more: providing an even better contribution to the green-space network in the area.

As a result of this extended period of consultation, major changes have been made to the plans for the cafe, which will now be enlarged within the existing Stable Block (rather than involving a new-build in the courtyard). The new cafe will provide an important income stream for “Marble Hill Revived” and we hope that the new designs will find favour with the planning department. Changes have also been made to the Play Area for young children and to certain aspects of the tree planting.

With regard to the House, we are delighted that the serious damp, electrical and building repairs outstanding for too long will now be properly addressed and that a platform lift will be installed to improve access to the piano nobile. The free opening on 5 days a week and the vastly improved presentation and interpretation of the House will surely attract many visitors to learn about the life and times of Marble Hill. We also welcome the involvement of Orleans Gallery in the expanded educational programme and the emphasis on the 18C life and times of Henrietta and her friends.

Regarding the Park, we are very pleased that the c1749 map is being used to inform the wonderful plans to reinstate Henrietta’s lost pleasure garden. We have always believed that the House and the Park are inextricably linked and should be enjoyed together to appreciate the full 18C importance of the site. This could be the jewel in the crown of the project and make Marble Hill a real go-to heritage site and a fabulous partner to the various sites of historic interest along the Thames which the borough and our partner groups and organisations are working to promote. The improvements to other aspects of the park and the wildlife habitats are also warmly welcomed.

The sports facilities are an important part of community use and enjoyment of the park and the proposed improvements to drainage, turf quality and pitch care will improve the range and frequency of activities. We also welcome the long overdue though modest improvements to the changing facilities.

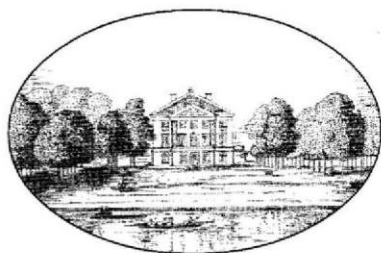
The Marble Hill Society is delighted to be part of this project. We were on the Steering Group and are helping to promote the project through our Newsletters, meetings and website. For some years we have provided volunteer guides for tours of the House, and the guides have helped to inform the plans for improving the presentation and interpretation of the House. Though few in number, our concerts in the Great Room have made the House come alive, and we welcome the “Marble Hill Revived” Activity Plan and trust that there will be many opportunities in the future for music and drama in the House and in the Pleasure Garden which complement Henrietta’s life and times. There is a great demand for high quality cultural activities from residents and visitors and significant interest in Marble Hill, its history, and the life of Henrietta and her friends both at the Georgian court and here in Twickenham.

#### Conclusion

Due to many years of under-investment, the House and the Park do not meet their potential as heritage assets in our community. The plans before you are transformative and will bring to life the wonderful story of Henrietta Howard’s home and history to be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. They would make a radical difference to the future financial viability of Marble Hill and ensure that it remains open to the public for the enjoyment of everyone.

Denise Carr, Chair, Marble Hill Society

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