

## Comment on a planning application

### Application Details

**Application:** 18/2977/FUL

**Address:** Marble Hill HouseMarble Hill ParkRichmond RoadTwickenhamTW1 2NL

**Proposal:** 1. Marble Hill House: External decoration and repair work (if a window is substantially rotten, partial or full replacement of joinery) and replacement rooflight. 2. Stable Block: External alterations, installation of mechanical plant, timber plant enclosure to the rear and front landscaping (creating an outdoor seating area) to facilitate the refurbishment of the existing café.3. Service Yard: new pedestrian access and associated refuse storage facilities.4. Landscaping: new soft and hard landscaping including restoration of gardens, upgrade of sports pitches and facilities, replacement of seating and new play areas.5. Sports Centre: External ramp for improved access.

### Comments Made By

**Name:** Dr David Jacques

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### Comments

**Type of comment:** Support the proposal

**Comment:** [continued]

#### The track

The track had been diverted from the back of the meadows (i.e. the base of the earthwork terraces) to the riverside terrace in order to maintain the right of way held by copyholders and their tenants. The terrace, however, came to an abrupt halt at Thomas Vernon's Park Close, as he refused to allow it to be continued further. Access to the Glasshouse, later Fridenberg's house, later called Little Marble Hill, could be either by a dogleg along the eastern side of the eastern grove to connect to the bottom end of Worple Way (the approach to the house and its continuation southwards), or down Worple Way itself, and then along the old line through the northern side of Park Close. This is all clear from a close study of the 1750 plan. This situation underlay the disputes with owner of the Glasshouse, Mr Plomer, from 1739, and then with Mr Fridenberg in the 1750s.

LMH's opinion is that the track along the back of the meadows was open until 1749 at least, but if this were so there would have been no reason for the disputes with Plomer in 1739 or Mrs Alton in 1749.

#### The Rocque map

Rocque's map, titled London and the Country Near Ten Miles Round, of 1746, shows an extremely simple layout for Marble Hill, apparently consisting of avenues down each side of the gardens to the river and an avenue from the villa to the river down the middle. This part of the Rocque map is not good in the detail, and is in error in showing a central avenue (instead of the probable vista). One of the inferences that one can make about it was that planting had probably been carried down to the river prior to the 1750s. LMH does not dwell on this map.

#### The Heckell view

The view in this engraving, of the villa from across the river, shows the chestnut groves to have been splayed outwards towards the river. This, however, is contradicted by (i) the 1750 plan, (ii) a view attributed to John Spyers, and (iii) the Saulthier map, which all show the groves controlling a vista of constant width.

LMH argue that the Heckell view was a literal representation and thus that the vista was splayed and not controlled in a constant width by the groves. Possibly Heckell thought that a splayed arrangement would look better: we can't tell, but the likelihood is that the other sources are collectively closer to the actualité.

1749 and 1750 plans.

These plans were obviously intended as a record of land ownership, though the precise occasion for their creation has not been verified. The parcels of land were accurately measured and drawn out, as can be seen by the faint construction lines on the draft. EH's interpretation of these plans as an accurate survey by the Dukes' surveyor, James Dorret, is quite justified.

LMH see these plans as a base upon which a design by the Duke of Argyll could be drawn out, but which, however, was never implemented. This is just an assertion, without any supporting evidence, and is unlikely anyway for reasons of style.

#### Style

My book, *Gardens of Court and Country*, addresses English garden design from the seventeenth century up till the 1730s. I can say that the garden design shown on the 1750 plan has the hallmarks of the 1720s. Whether it remained as pristine as shown may be open to question, as gradual simplification would have been probable. The Sweet Walk, with its flowing lines and arrangement of fence, walk and rising planting was much more typical of the 1750s, and to attribute the 1750 garden design to that date is pretty improbable.

[end]