

## 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:** London Parks and Gardens Trust Mrs Helen Monger

**Address:** DUCK ISLAND COTTAGE ST JAMES'S PARK HORSE GUARDS ROAD LONDON SW1A 2BJ

### Comments

**Type of comment:** Support the proposal

**Comment:** I write as Director of the London Parks & Gardens Trust to confirm support for this planning application, and to urge your Council to grant consent.

LPGT is affiliated to the Gardens Trust, a statutory consultee in respect of planning applications affecting sites included in the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Marble Hill Park is registered at grade II\*, the House is listed at grade I, and the Stables and Ice House are listed at grade II. Marble Hill House is held in the highest esteem and is regarded as being among the earliest and finest of the Palladian Revival villas of the 1720s. The house and park survive thanks largely to the intervention in 1901 of the London County Council and other local planning authorities and private donors, who purchased the estate from the Cunard shipping line family, which had acquired the site for development following the death of the last private owner and had already started laying roads and sewers at the north end. The saving of Marble Hill came about as part of the popular movement to protect the view from Richmond Hill (1902 Act of Parliament), and resulted from a series of so-called Indignation Meetings (see Indignation! The campaign for conservation. Batey, Lambert, Wilkie. Kit-Cat Books, 2000).

The amenities, and especially the riverside amenities, of Richmond and Twickenham have always inspired strong affection and sometimes provoked heated debate, and that is clearly still the case with the current planning application. The 25,000-word document recently submitted by the Love Marble Hill group seeks, but in the view of LPGT fails, to undermine the scholarship of English Heritage and also fails to address the major issue – which is that the house and park are deteriorating and looking shabby and need substantial investment of money and effort to bring them back to an acceptable (one might hope exemplary) condition. There can be no doubt that Alexander Pope and Charles Bridgeman had a formative influence on the park and gardens, and to suggest otherwise as LMH do is untenable. Pope was a friend and neighbour of Henrietta Howard as well as being the leading literary figure of the day and promoter of a less formal, more “natural” (however contrived it may appear to us now) style of gardening, and Bridgeman was royal gardener to Queen Caroline at Kensington Gardens and Richmond Gardens. Caroline, who in 1726 “travelled by water with her children to Henrietta Howard’s new estate at Marble Hill” (Letter Books of John Hervey, 1st Earl of Bristol), led the fashion in gardening at the time and had summoned Pope and Bridgeman to her garden conference at Kew in 1719. Henrietta was part of the Queen’s household and was at least as up-to-date as her royal mistress, with whom she had at best an equivocal relationship. The repair or restoration of an historic garden is an imprecise art compared with the restoration of a building, subject as it is to the passage of time and natural growth and decay as well as to a more or less complete knowledge of what has gone before. Inevitably it involves the occasionally subjective interpretation of physical, archaeological and documentary evidence and new intervention, and factors such as familiar if sometimes unplanned views, modern financial and social realities, and the continuing suitability of historic plant material which may now be

subject to pathogens. The HLF has offered funding for English Heritage's proposed works, and have themselves the rigorous expertise to be satisfied that the scheme is practically and historically sound. A number of eminent garden historians including Dr Marion Harney, Dr David Jacques and Michael Symes have recently written to you in support proposals, and the LPGT wishes to add its endorsement and respectfully requests that your Council grant consent.