



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

President: The Countess of Harewood

Vice-presidents: Lady Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox

www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Planning.comments@york.gov.uk

FAO Lauren Cripps

conservation@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

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Dear Ms Cripps

Planning reference 26/00776/FUL – The Retreat, Heslington Road, York

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee for proposed developments affecting sites included by Historic England (HE) on its Register of Parks & Gardens. Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in the protection and conservation of registered sites and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf. Our focus is the proposal to vary condition 23, with specific reference to hardscape and boundaries.

Historic England in its response reiterates the unique status of the Retreat landscape as the only asylum complex to have been graded at II*. It notes the integration of landscape and buildings as key tools in the moral therapy approach largely designed here at the Retreat, and the similarity of design to neighbouring gentry landscapes. In this context GT and YGT are concerned at the use of black tarmac so deep into this unique landscape. Black tarmac evokes, and is designed for, vehicular traffic: it shouts 'road' to every user. It is not a suitable surface to evoke and recall the importance of the landscape's intention to welcome foot traffic as opposed to powered vehicles, and is therefore inimical to the purpose of the founders and their successors. We suggest that there are more modern surface treatments (such as that used outside York Minster, or extensively in the gardens at RHS Harlow Carr) that can function in practical terms as black tarmac does, but is gentler on the eye and, most importantly, is more sympathetic to the historic design of the landscape as a place primarily for pedestrians seeking refuge (retreat) from the vehicle-dominated world outside.

We also wish to comment on the boundary treatments of some individual plots. The introduction of new native hedging is welcome. We anticipate that this will be mixed hedging (as used nearby on the Heslington West campus of the University of York) for aesthetic variety and greater biodiversity; the Tukes would have been familiar with the three species often suggested as a minimum by contemporary enclosure commissioners. We are concerned, however, by the proposals to introduce fencing of various kinds, which, as with the black tarmac, is used deep into the landscape. Apart from breaking up historic views, modern fencing does not help to tie the landscape into its historic past, nor does it assist at all

with the biodiversity of the site. Accepting the need to introduce physical boundaries to individual plots, and the consequent inevitability of the interruption of some historic views, we suggest that native hedges would be more sympathetic than fences. In these cases, single species hedges (such as yew or holly) might present more easily managed boundaries than would a mixed hedge.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Webb

YGT

cc. Yorkshire@historicengland.org.uk
consult@thegardenstrust.org.uk
conservation@thegardenstrust.org.uk