YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

President: The Countess of Harewood
Vice-presidents: Lady Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox
www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Niamh Bonner
Planning Officer
North Yorkshire Council
Niamh.Bonner@northyorks,gov.uk

Mrs Val Hepworth
Trustee
Conservation and Planning

conservation@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

26th September 2026

Dear Ms Bonner

ZE26/00361/LBC | Subdivision of Aislaby Hall from the annex to include internal and external alterations to form 2no. residential units and new gated entrance onto the A170 (part retrospective) | Aislaby Hall Main Street Aislaby North Yorkshire YO18 8PE

This planning application has been brought to our attention by The Georgian Group and we apologise that this letter is well beyond the response date but hope that you will be able to accept it. Although the Yorkshire Gardens Trust has not researched the site, we are aware of the significance of the gardens due to a member who was researching the statues of Van Nost visiting Aislaby Hall several decades ago. The gardens at that time still included four lead statues of Apollo, Mars, Diana and Fame(?) that had been installed c.1770. (At Duncombe Park, Helmsley – Registered Grade I – there is a large figure of Father Time holding a sundial, attributed to Van Nost c. 1715).

The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the Gardens Trust and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of historic parks and gardens in Yorkshire. We would like to make the following comments regarding the garden and its structures:

The garden is not on the Historic England (HE) Register of Parks and Gardens but clearly has considerable significance in the setting of the house and seems to have retained its historic proportions and structures quite well, being enclosed by the garden wall.

Aislaby Hall (Grade II*) built in 1742 incorporates the remains of an earlier Elizabethan house in the wing of 1896, and significantly the Front Wall, Gate Piers and the Gazebo are all Grade II* with the extremely dilapidated Garden Shelter Grade II. It is a remarkable assemblage. In particular, the Gazebo making a 'full stop' at the eastern end of the 4m high wall which encloses the walled garden makes a very visible contribution to the streetscape on the A170 road as it passes through Aislaby Conservation Area. The whole 18th century frontage which includes the original 18th century pedestrian gate, protected the calm and serenity of the garden and thus the atmosphere and setting for the Hall removing residents and its visitors from the busyness of the road. We understand that there is also evidence on the ground of a designed formal avenue from the original 18th century pedestrian gate directly towards the Grade II listed Garden Shelter / theatre. This avenue may be later than the original designed layout as the age of the shelter is unclear, however a structure in this location appears to be depicted on the 1810 estate plan (at North Yorkshire Record Office) suggesting it may be at least of that date.

The Garden Wall is constructed of stone on the road side (north) and brick on its southern face indicating that the wall on the garden side is likely to have been important for growing wall fruit with

the brick absorbing sunlight, retaining heat and slowly letting the heat dissipate, particularly important with chilly/frosty spring mornings.

The Gazebo has a superb painted ceiling by Francis Nicholson of Pickering and is in a poor state of repair. The building of gazebos enabled even owners with only modest landholdings to follow one of Stephen Switzer's (1682-1745) recommendations that '…all the adjacent country [should] be laid open to view.' East Hall at Middleton Tyas (NGR: NZ2286405941, List entry: 1317088) has an early 18th century gazebo and walled gardens; a similar situation to Aislaby Hall and by 1749 there was also a two-storey gazebo at the northwest corner of the walled formal gardens (now gone) at Richmond's Temple Grounds (Registered Grade II) shown on the South West Prospect of Richmond 1749, by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. Others further afield include a Garden Room/Gazebo attached to the wall of the walled garden at Cusworth Hall near Doncaster (Registered Grade II).

The Garden Shelter / theatre we understand only survives as dismantled remains with the loss of 2no. carved wooden pieces of possible medieval date which had been incorporated into the structure. These are noted in the listing description and various historic descriptions of the structure.

From the brief information gathered and without a site visit, it does seem that the family at Aislaby Hall laid out their south-facing gardens with more distant views beyond, in the early 18th century style that we could call the 'Transition' period in landscape design; between the strictly formal and geometric designs of the William and Mary and Queen Anne gardens (c.1688-1714) and the English Landscape style developed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and his followers from the middle of the 18th century. Statues and elaborate garden buildings were part of the 'Transition' period of design.

We have carefully considered the planning application documents regarding the proposals for the garden area and the responses from Historic England and The Georgian Group, and we wish to support and concur with the advice/comments of both Historic England and The Georgian Group.

We are particularly concerned about the proposals to form a new vehicle access gate through the Garden Wall which is Grade II*. This would result in loss of historic fabric, affect the historic character of the Aislaby Conservation Area, be a significant intrusion into the setting of the Hall and the other heritage assets and be contrary to the historic character of the garden. The proposed gates would be visually prominent both in the setting of the Hall from the Aislaby Conservation Area but also from within the garden. This would be significantly harmful.

In our view the degraded state of the Gazebo and the virtual loss of the Garden Shelter/Theatre are also key issues which should be addressed. The Gazebo is a significant historic structure, probably original to the design for the Aislaby Hall garden and we advise that it should be fully assessed with a conservation plan and restored. Similarly, the Garden Shelter/Theatre. There is an opportunity to restore and integrate these historic structures into the gardens to be enjoyed by the occupants of the new dwellings in the Hall.

Also, in terms of the historic garden area, it seems unfortunate that there is a proposal for car parking spaces (no 14 on plan) to be built and an access track and hardstanding (no 13 on plan). In our view this is very much at odds with the heritage of the site albeit that the tree cover will give some visual protection from the rest of the garden. We also query the proposal for new native species hedgerow to denote boundaries. This is a heritage ornamental garden not just an area of greenspace and whilst native species are important there are many species of ornamental trees and shrubs that provide cover, flowers, food and biodiversity for our wildlife as well as enhancing the heritage setting that would be much more appropriate for hedging in an historic garden area. Although there has been changes in the gardens since they were first laid out in the mid 18th century we suggest that the plans for the garden area could pay more attention to their historic design as the setting for the more than special architectural and historic interest of the Hall.

Yours sincerely,

Val Hepworth
Trustee Conservation and Planning

Cc.Dr Kristof Fatsar, Landscape Architect North of England, Historic England
e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk; Conservation@ the Gardens Trust