



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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Dear Mr MacPhail

Consultation on Felling Licence for Rievaulx Terrace 012/833/2023 grid ref: SE 579 847

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development affecting a site listed by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens. In this case Rievaulx Terrace, which is registered grade I. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations.

Rievaulx Terrace is an internationally important historic garden and park; hence its grade I registration. The layout of the Terrace with the emphasis on unfolding views rather than formal axis was a departure which has been described as 'a landmark in the development of English Landscape style (Ref 1: Jellicoe et al 1986).

I have consulted my YGT Conservation colleague Linda Smith for the following extract taken from

"The shock of the old: changing identities of monastic ruins in Georgian gardens" Linda Smith, unpublished dissertation MA historical archaeology, University of York, 2014.

"The terrace above Rievaulx Abbey was laid out by an unknown designer and even the date is uncertain although it is known to have been done during Thomas Duncombe III's time (succeeded in 1746, died in 1799). Thomas Gill, a local historian, gives the date as 1758, without evidence, and it was certainly in place by 1771 when Arthur Young the agricultural improver and writer, wrote a long and ecstatic footnote about "Rival's Abbey" [sic] in "*Six months travels in the North of England...*". He described the mixture of ruin and nature as "... scattered trees appearing among the ruins in a style too elegantly picturesque to admit description: it is a casual glance at a little paradise which seems as it were in another region." Layout of the terrace is simple, one enters through a stone gateway in the centre of the landward side to be confronted by a broad smooth sward backed by a wavy and

thick line of trees and shrubs; in front is the edge of the cliff with hanging woods. Walking to the left, a round Tuscan temple comes into view, inside which the floor is laid with geometric patterns of medieval tiles which are reported to have come from the altar end of the church in 1821. Walking along the cliff edge the trees are cut back at intervals to reveal specific views: a stone bridge, the valley with red pantiled roofs on the buildings and small hedged fields, finally the abbey ruins with the church standing tall amongst them. At the far end of the terrace, not visible from the Tuscan temple, is an Ionic temple with fragments of carved stone at its base and a highly decorated interior dining room. The temples echo those in Duncombe Park which are possibly by [Charles] Bridgeman. The terrace design leads the visitor on a meandering walk, during which one experiences the changing views contrived by the utilisation of the curved shape of the cliff edge and the tree planting: a succession of art and nature repeated constantly, in Gill's opinion."

The description in Reference 2 below is from the HE Register entry dated 1998 and it appears that the woodland on the scarp slope has already been replanted in the 20th century, but we have not been given any information as to why it needed felling and replanting again so soon.

On a visit to Rievaulx Terrace on 4th March YGT Chairman, Christopher Webb, noted that felling had taken place in all the compartments identified on the consultation map, some of the felling being (judging by the cleanliness of the stumps and sawdust) very recent.

We appreciate that March is the end of the felling season as birds start nesting so we can understand why felling had taken place either before we were consulted or as the e-mail was being sent out. However, this makes the consultation something of a pointless exercise. But in view of the Grade I listing we trust that Historic England has advised.

From the very inadequate information we have been given it appears that there is to be roughly equal amounts of felling and restocking in compartments R1a, R1c, R2 and R3b but no restocking in R1b, R3a or R4, which may represent thinning as the trees mature. We are unsure of the meaning of the terms 'Halo' or 'H and S'.

The most important observation we make is to ensure the thirteen views down the slope are retained within the new planting, or the *raison d'etre* of the Terrace, and its international significance is made redundant.

Yours sincerely

Val Hepworth
Trustee Conservation and Planning

cc. Historic England e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk; Conservation@ the Gardens Trust

REFERENCES:

1. G & S Jellicoe *et al*, *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, 1986, p471
2. Description from the entry on the Parks and Gardens.org web site <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/rievaulx-terrace>

The **grassed terrace** follows a curving course between the two temples which are c 700m apart and not fully visible from one another. Each one comes into full view of the other, framed by trees, as a promenade is made along the Terrace. The band of **woodland** which acts as a backcloth on the east side of the Terrace has a waved edge which emphasises the curve of the Terrace. On the west side there is a curving scarp and the land falls very steeply to the west. The slope is covered with trees

(largely replanted, late C20) and thirteen vistas have been cut through them recreating vistas described in the C18. The result is a sequence of views of the valley and the river backed by the tree-clad slopes of Ashberry Hill with the Abbey ruins in the foreground. An early C19 guide (quoted in guidebook 1992) to the site recommended turning to the south from the central entrance and walking to the Tuscan Temple before returning and continuing to the Ionic Temple. The Tuscan Temple is also the starting point for Arthur Young's 1771 description of the site (ibid).

A vista from the **Tuscan Temple** gives a glimpse of Rievaulx Bridge (listed grade II) c 400m to the south-west, and there are changing views of the valley as the visitor walks northwards. The Abbey ruins first appear in a view of the tall lancets of the Abbey church's (liturgical) east end and the disposition of the ruins and surrounding scenery changes as the visitor proceeds. As the **Ionic Temple** is approached there are views directly to the north transept of the church with tall lancet windows. In addition to the views into the valley there are spectacular long-distance views to the west along the whole length of the Terrace, over Ashberry Hill and to open land beyond.