

19/2006/025

MR PHILIP GIBBS

**ERECTION OF GARDEN BUILDING IN PARKLAND OPPOSITE HATCH COURT,
HATCH BEAUCHAMP, TAUNTON**

330820/120640

FULL

PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the erection of a hexagonal, single room, garden building of 4.5 m in diameter. The building would be constructed above a rusticated Batt stone plinth, the walls rendered in lime mortar and all cills, architraves and mouldings cut from Bath stone to match the masonry of the house. Glazing would be vertical sliding sashes with handmade glass and the roof covered with hand cut Delabole slates with a painted timber cupola at the apex.

The building would be sited within the grounds of Hatch Court, a Grade I country house of classical design, and within a field on the opposite side of the Curry Mallett road. Hatch Court is, and the proposed building would be, set within a Grade I Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest. The building would also be sited with a Country Wildlife site and within Fivehead Vale Landscape Character Area.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST as far as we are aware there are limited or no archaeological implications to this proposal and we therefore have no objections on archaeological grounds. ENGLISH HERITAGE Hatch Court is a fine small country house of classical design set in a grade II registered historic landscape. The house was constructed in the mid eighteenth century, by a designer believed to have had connections with other country houses in Somerset, and it is likely that a designed landscape was laid out at the same time although there was also a major phase of works in the late eighteenth century. The grounds contain the remains of an interesting eighteenth century landscape garden, now, unfortunately, in divided ownership and somewhat altered by the loss of historic structures and planting belts, and by new tree planting reflecting the changes of ownership. The proposal to construct a new ornamental garden structure is not one to which English Heritage would object in principle, since it is known that such structures were a feature of the eighteenth century landscape at Hatch Court. However, we do have concerns at the location of the proposed building since it assumes a very formal relationship with the house which does not appear to be informed by detailed historic research or to be characteristic of historic landscapes of this period elsewhere in the area. No specific justification is given for the precise location of the building but comparisons are made with other designed landscapes. In fact, the example given of the site apparently with closest links to Hatch Court - Halswell House in Goathurst - is somewhat misleading since although the Temple of Harmony currently stands in open pasture it was designed to be set within a wood in which other ornamental structures were also situated. The position either within a wood, or set against a backdrop of woodland

(such as Robin Hood's Hut at Halswell) was, in fact, a much more characteristic location for such buildings than open parkland. In the case of Hatch Court, research undertaken so far suggests that all the ornamental garden structures were located within Line Wood, which is situated to the north of the house and now within separate ownership. We would question, therefore, whether it is appropriate to situate a building clearly intended to be seen as a high status feature within a designed historic landscape, in a historically incorrect position and one which, furthermore, is so visually prominent in relation to the grade I listed house. It is unfortunate that, due to the separation of ownership, the current owner of the house does not control the area of land most likely to have contained the original ornamental structures, but it might still be worth him commissioning research from a historic landscape consultant to investigate alternative, more appropriate, locations for a garden structure, on which we would be happy to comment. We would urge you to address the above issues, and recommend that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice. It is not necessary for us to be consulted again. However, if you would like further advice, please contact us to explain your request. GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY Hatch Court is a site of national importance, as signified by its inclusion on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest. This is a highly selective list, comprising just under 1600 sites. PPG 15 is quite clear in its advice that 'planning authorities should protect registered parks and gardens in preparing development plans and in determining planning applications' (para.2.24). The PPG also confirms that the effect on a registered park or garden or its setting is a material consideration in assessing an application (para.2.24). We visited the site last week in response to the current application. We have viewed the English Heritage Register Map and entry and ask you to consider the following comments:- We consider that the proposal for a garden building in the field opposite Hatch Court is a most interesting one. We do have some concerns that perhaps the proposed design is rather elaborate - but then, the original pleasure ground walk did have something of the rococo about it. On balance we feel that the design is not an unduly harmful proposal even without modification. However, we are concerned about the location of the proposed building and suggest that it requires more careful consideration in a landscape context. We would question whether it is really appropriate for the proposed building to be seen in a 'stand alone' position against a solitary mature oak tree. We feel that there may be other, more appropriate sites for the building; it might be preferable and less dominant if the building were to be seen against the boundary plantation, embowered in the trees. The way in which this landscape worked in the C18 was that there was relatively little immediately round the house, but the pleasure grounds took the form of an extended walk along the ridge north of the house, with various buildings scattered at intervals along it. It is not quite true to say that nothing but the views and mounds survive today: there are remains of the grotto and archaeological remnants of other features. We understand that there was, historically, never a building in the park on the south side of the house, and presumably this contrast was deliberate and part of the aesthetic. There was a greenhouse (said to have been designed by Winde, which pre-dates the present house), but its location is unknown. It may have been north-west of the church near the old fish ponds which may be the serpentine water referred to in the C18 and C19 descriptions - not that they are exactly serpentine. The supporting statement is interesting, but perhaps needs expanding. We are interested in the parallel examples produced, and think that the

architect might have considered some of Sanderson Miller's garden buildings; the Oval Pavilion and the Temple on the terrace at Farnborough Hall, Warwickshire or the Game Larder at Farnborough seem particularly relevant in this case and might provide a useful model. The point is that Prowse and Miller are known to have worked closely together, and while there is no documentary evidence that Miller visited Hatch, there are stylistic similarities with sites where he is known to have worked, and he is known to have visited Wokey Hole in Somerset. We suggest that the architect is referred to these buildings, and to Jennifer Meir's recent book on Miller's landscapes published by Philimore. We suggest that this might be helpful both in terms of this proposal and in understanding the way the landscape was supposed to work. We fully appreciate, of course, that the landscape cannot now work as it was originally intended because it is in divided ownership. Good conservation practice indicates that any changes should flow clearly from a thorough understanding of the designed landscape and should not compromise the potential for repairs to the historic landscape in the future. We would suggest that the applicant should undertake, or commission, research of archive material which may be held in the County Record Office or the District Council. This historical research should follow the guidance set out in *Researching a garden's history: A guide to Documentary and Published Sources* (1995) published by the Garden History Society. Sale catalogues, estate accounts, maps and plans can provide valuable sources of information for a site such as this to assist in the future management of the landscape. English Heritage would provide a list of recognised historic landscape consultants. In conclusion, the Society would advise that that, ideally, a Landscape Strategy and Conservation Management Plan for Hatch Court should be prepared before the application is determined in order to provide the full context for the consideration of the location of the proposed building. This plan would also provide clearer guidance and priorities for landscape improvements.

PARISH COUNCIL supports.

1 LETTER OF SUPPORT has been submitted which welcomes such a sympathetic addition to the estate.

POLICY CONTEXT

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 and S2 seek to safeguard, inter alia, the appearance and character of any affected landscape or building. Policy EN3 ensures that development which would significantly adversely affect local nature conservation or geological interests will not be permitted. Policies EN6 and EN20 seek to resist development which would adversely affect the appearance, setting, character and historic interest of parks and gardens of special historic interest. Policy EN11 seeks to resist development which would harm the appearance, character and contribution to landscape quality of special landscape features, and Policy EN16 seeks to resist development proposals which would harm the setting of a listed building.

ASSESSMENT

I would concur with the views of both English Heritage and The Garden History Society in that whilst the principle for such a well designed garden structure may be

acceptable, the proposed siting of the building is not acceptable, and would adversely affect the setting of the Grade I Hatch Court, and the appearance, setting, character, and historic interest of this garden of Special Historic Interest. It is also concluded that the proposed siting in this obtrusive location would adversely affect the character and appearance of the open countryside and the landscape quality of this Special Landscape Feature.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be REFUSED for the following reason that the proposed development would adversely affect the setting of Hatch Court; the appearance, setting, character and historic interest of this garden of Special Historic Interest; the character and appearance of this open countryside location; and the appearance, character and contribution to landscape quality of this Special Landscape Feature. The proposal is therefore conflicts with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2, EN6, EN20, EN11 and EN16. Note re suitable position may be possible and should be accompanied by a Landscape Strategy and Management Plan.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: 356465 MR J GRANT

NOTES: