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Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham St
London
SW1P 4DF

4th April 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

Concern Over the Removal of Statutory Consultees

We are writing as Members of Parliament representing constituencies in Surrey to express our deep concern over the Government's plans to remove a number of statutory consultees, like the Gardens Trust, in the planning process.

Currently, the Gardens Trust plays a crucial role in safeguarding our country's historic parks and gardens. As a statutory consultee, it provides expert advice on planning applications that may affect sites designated on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, which includes over 1,700 registered parks and gardens across the country, graded I, II*, and II. Each year, the Trust is consulted on approximately 1,800 planning applications, offering hundreds of constructive recommendations to support positive and sustainable change.

The proposed removal of the Gardens Trust from this process risks significantly weakening the protection of these irreplaceable cultural and historic landscapes. Without their oversight, local planning authorities will be deprived of the essential expertise needed to assess the potential impact of developments on these nationally important sites. This change increases the risk of inappropriate development, potential loss, or irreversible damage to some of our most treasured historic green spaces.

Furthermore, we have broader concerns about the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, which continues a highly centralised, developer-led approach that has historically failed to deliver the necessary infrastructure, including community transport, environmental protections, and healthcare provisions, required to support sustainable development. The bill undermines the independence of local government and limits the ability of communities to have a meaningful stake in planning decisions that directly impact them.

We urge the Government to reconsider the removal of the Gardens Trust and others as a statutory consultee and to ensure that expert scrutiny remains a key part of the planning process for the sake of our historic parks and gardens. We would welcome a discussion with you on this matter and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Maguire - Member of Parliament for Epsom and Ewell