

AVENUE HOUSE ESTATE TRUST

FOR STEPHENS HOUSE & GARDENS

The tables below itemise the schemes that the Avenue House Estate Trust has developed for its 'Parks for People' project.

The project covers most of the Estate, with three exceptions:

- Avenue House itself
- The Lodge House at the east side of the stables yard, and
- The Bothy (although the Bothy Garden and its wall are included)

The schemes include physical work on many of the buildings, other than the three listed above, to suit today's uses of the Estate, and also major works to restore the gardens to the splendour of Robert Marnock's original concepts, whilst again making them fit for today's purpose of being a place of relaxation and enjoyment in our busy urban area.

The attached drawings, whilst slightly out of date in detail, show clearly what is proposed overall.

The Trust has been able to develop this project with support from many funders, which we gratefully acknowledge, and in particular that from the Heritage Lottery Fund, from the Big Lottery, and from the London Borough of Barnet.

ARCHITECTURAL WORKS

Water Tower

The crenelated water tower, adjacent to East End Road, is one of the earliest post-Roman concrete structures in the UK, and is Grade 2 listed. Its condition has been a cause for concern for many years, and it is on English Heritage's 'At Risk' register. During the development phase of the project AHET carried out full ecological and structural surveys of the tower, which revealed both that it was not, as was thought, a habitat for bats, and that its structural condition, despite its poor appearance, was far better than had been thought, and there was no risk of the structure failing.

AHET has since removed the ivy from the water tower, and in conjunction with the Hendon and District Archaeological Society, is investigating the water system that served the tower. The Project includes the external restoration of the tower, and provision of interpretation as to its function in Stephens' time. On conclusion of the works English Heritage has indicated that it will remove the tower from its 'At Risk' Register.

Bothy Garden Walls

The Bothy, another equally early concrete structure, is also Grade 2 listed and on the 'At Risk' register.

Because of past issues over the Bothy the HLF was unwilling, at the time that AHET developed its scheme, to consider works in the Bothy itself, but it has agreed to fund works in the Bothy Gardens, and to the boundary wall to the north and west of the gardens.

AHET will restore the concrete faces of the walls, re-install windows to the two towers in this section of them, and reinstate guttering and other rainwater goods. This will restore the two garden walls to a stage where they could be removed from the 'At Risk' register, although this is unlikely until the Bothy itself is restored.

Although not part of the project, AHET's sub-tenants, Terapia, are investigating ways of raising funds to restore the Bothy itself, with the support and help of AHET. We hope that with the passage of time the HLF will once more consider funding works in the Bothy, which would enable its full restoration in the near future.

Toilet Block

During its administration of the Estate the Council / Borough installed a gents' toilet between the Bothy and the play area. This was abandoned long ago, and the building is now hidden behind bushes, and semi derelict.

AHET intends to restore the building, but use it as a refreshment kiosk to serve the play area. A single, fully accessible, toilet will be provided, a much needed facility in this part of the gardens.

New garden store building

In order to release the garage to become an activity centre (see below) AHET has to provide a new store for its tools and equipment. It also wishes to provide toilet, messing and shower facilities for its volunteers (and indeed its paid gardening staff). This will be done by building a new block in the compound immediately adjacent to the gardens in the north-west corner of the gardens. The single-storey building will be built on minimal foundations to ensure no interference with tree roots, and will be fully accessible.

Stable block and toilets

The cluster of three 'arts and craft' style buildings around the stables yards is, without doubt, the most attractive architectural feature of the whole estate, and the Trust intends to make a major feature of them. All three buildings are Grade 2 listed. The Lodge House is not part of this proposal, but the two other buildings are. The changes listed in this and the next two sections have all received planning and listed building consent.

The stables block itself will be converted to a café / restaurant. Several structural alterations are proposed, mainly:

- Demolition of the existing kiosk on the north side of the building
- Letting three windows into the north side of the building so that it is possible to see from the café into the gardens
- Creating a passage through the former boot room to ease the flow of people between the café and the gardens
- Extending the terraced area to the north of the building, looking out over the gardens
- Conversion of the east end of the block into a modern set of fully accessible toilets, to replace the present substandard offering.

Refurbishment of existing garage block

The north wing and central block of the garage are currently used as AHET's main tool store, whilst the south wing, until very recently, was leased to the Hendon and District Archaeological Society. HADAS has already re-located to elsewhere on the Estate, and AHET will move its tools and stores to the new building described above.

Once this is done AHET will be able to convert the building to an activity centre, as part of its plans to increase the educational role of the gardens, and to work with charities to become a therapeutic centre as well as one for informal relaxation.

As part of the project the demolished arch between the stables block and the garage will be reinstated.



Service Yard

Surrounded by the three listed buildings, this yard was once a main entrance to the Estate, and it is AHET's intention to recreate that feature. We have planning consent to reopen the original gateway from East End Road into the yard, and will also resurface the yard in appropriate material to recognise its heritage, and to provide an attractive area to sit outside the café restaurant and the activity centre.

LANDSCAPE WORKS

Reinstatement of Irrigation System

Stephens designed a complex irrigation system to serve the Estate, based on a drain carrying a considerable flow from his Great Tapes Field (now Hall School playing field) through his gardens, which fed his irrigation system and the pond, as well as irrigating a wet garden. The system has fallen into partial disrepair since Stephens' death, and as a result there is now no flow to the wet garden or the pond. As a consequence the pond has to be filled and aerated by pumping, and the wet garden has dried out. In addition the remaining system cannot cope with the flow in times of extreme rainfall, and as a result several areas of the grounds flood. Incomplete work by a previous tenant in the Bothy mean that the drain also does not function properly here, again resulting in flooding.

AHET's project will create a new drain past the Bothy, to bypass the previous works, and will reinstated the gravity fed flows to the wet garden and the pond, restoring the system to its functionality in Stephens' time.

Landscape Works

The bulk of AHET's proposals are within the gardens, and designed to both make the gardens more fit for today's purpose, and to restore Marnock's and Stephens' original vision for the Estate so far as possible. ARther than listing individual items it is best to list the overall activities:

- Restoration of paths to a satisfactory condition;
- Reopening of paths behind pond and rockery;
- Restoration of rockery;
- Restoration of terrace and associated walls behind house;
- Provision of an observation platform on top of Monkey Hill
- Upgrading and expansion of play area for older children and young people
- Clearing of cascade and pond to make more open, including new fencing around pond
- Provision of a dipping platform by the pond
- Restoration of the wet garden
- Removal of approximately 30 trees classified as actually or potentially unsafe (subject to consent)
- Removal of approximately 40 trees of poor quality that are interfering with other, better specimens (subject to consent)
- Removal of approximately ten trees to recreate original vistas across the gardens (subject to consent)
- Crown raising of trees to improve vistas, particularly from the Terrace in the east and north east directions (subject to consent)
- Reduction in the number of flower beds and hedges to reduce the maintenance workload in the gardens.

MAINTENANCE AND ACTIVITY PLANS

AHET recognises that it is not enough to just restore the gardens, and that it is necessary to have both a maintenance plan and an activity plan, the first to ensure the upkeep of the Estate, and the second to maximise the number of people using the gardens. In doing the latter AHET particularly intends to continue to reach out to those people who live locally but do not use the gardens, and to try and increase the diversity of its users.

To achieve this the project includes the following extra staff:

- Park Management Advisor 2.5 days/wk for 2 yrs
- Volunteering, Learning & Outreach Officer Full Time for 3 yrs
- 2 Full time apprentices for 1 year

AHET hopes that it can continue to develop its business to the extent that it will be able to maintain these posts beyond the end of the project funding.



Chairman, Avenue House Estate Trust

AVENUE

HOUSE & GARDENS

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Site Masterplan

Key

-  Proposed new play features (natural)
-  Restored pond and aquatic planting
-  Restored rocky and new knee rail
-  Proposed viewing area on Monkey Hill
-  New paving/surface to house terrace
-  Enhanced bog garden
-  Restored stable block paving
-  Proposed areas of meadow grassland
-  Proposed tree works (key areas)
-  Proposed tree removal and/or relocation



AVENUE HOUSE & GARDENS

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Design Focus Areas

Views & Vistas



Avenue House & Gardens were designed as an enclosed, inward looking landscape with internal vistas between key points, most importantly:

- 1) Towards the House from the entrance carriageway
- 2) From the House & terrace across the pond to features such as the Blue Atlas Cedar
- 3) Towards the House from Monkey Hill & the north west path

Restoring these vistas will require a combination of shrub/tree works (crown lifting or thinning) and shrub/tree removals (selected trees that were not part of the original design).

The works will also benefit other views such as from the stables area to the pond and improve the lawn backdrop for events.



Current north east vista blocked by vegetation



Proposed reinstated view across the pond



Current obscured view to house



Proposed improved vista

House & Stables

The setting of Avenue House requires upgrading to recreate its grandeur, improve access and restore it as a focal point for the gardens. Proposals include repaving the terrace and replacing overgrown shrubs with quality planting.

The stables are an important focus for this project, creating an improved cafe hub with exhibition space, education facility and a new principal entrance into the gardens. The original stables entrance as shown on the historic 1918 photograph (right) will be re-created.



New herbaceous planting



Indicative terrace paving



1918



2013

New stable block courtyard and park entrance



cazenove



Financially assisted by Barnet Council

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Design Focus Areas

Pond, Rockery & Bog Garden



The pond is an original focal point and feature of the garden. It is currently functioning but not realising its full potential.

The proposals will enhance the pond, improving its biodiversity and create an attractive backdrop to the lawns.



The rockery is another historic feature with its distinctive shape and limestone rocks but the planting is sparse and lacking interest.

This project will rebuild and replant the rockery with carefully selected plants, providing additional interest in this area of the garden.



The bog garden is an interesting relic, presumed to be part of the original water circulation and storage system which is no longer in use causing the bog garden to dry out.

If the system can be restored to provide water to the bog garden it will be appropriately replanted.



Restore pond edge



Ecology and education



Restore rockery



New planting



Bog Garden



New/lost planting

Playground

The existing playground is a popular area and helps to draw in local people. The equipment provides some interest for children but does not fit in with the aesthetic of Avenue House Gardens.

The proposals retain the existing equipment, open up and increase the size of the play area, providing additional play features, planting, a cafe kiosk and space for picnics. The new items could include woven willow features, sand play and equipment for older children.



Sand play



Natural play



Willow tunnel



Timber climbing tower



Natural play



Parkland fencing

cazenove

