Scotland's Garden & Landscape Heritage

FAO: Brent Vivian, Senior Planning Officer 10 December 2023

By email only: brent.vivian@falkirk.gov.uk

Dear Mr Vivian,

Case Ref: P/23/0577/PPP: Construction of Visitor Centre to Include Information / Exhibition Space, Arts and Craft Workshop, Restrooms, Café and Retail Area and up to 82 Dwellinghouses and Associated Works at Land to the west of Brachenber House, Cemetery Road, Airth

Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage is grateful to be included in the above planning application consultation. The proposed development is located within the Dunmore Park designed landscape GDL00158 and may have an impact on The Pineapple designed landscape GDL00368 which are both included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland and therefore assessed by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to be of National significance.

We have studied the documentation submitted with the application, including the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Heritage Impact Assessment and Indicative Masterplan. The proposals concern the construction of a Visitor Centre and a Residential Development on Cemetery Road.

Visitor Centre

We consider that the location of the proposed Visitor Centre, whilst welcome, is too remote from the Pineapple and Walled Garden to fulfil the intended purpose of a Visitor Centre to The Pineapple. We therefore question whether the purpose of the Visitor Centre is to fulfil the role of a visitor centre to The Pineapple or is intended as a café and retail destination in its own right.

We would expect The Pineapple Visitor Centre to be a dedicated facility developed in conjunction with The National Trust for Scotland and the Landmark Trust who lease The Pineapple for short holiday lets from the Trust, to be of considerable architectural merit and

sensitively located within the vicinity of The Pineapple, potentially within the 'lesser' walled garden located to the east of the main walled garden.

Indicative Masterplan

The indicative masterplan indicates a Bio-diversity enhancements to the south and southeast of the Visitor Centre. These appear to be structure planting to screen the proposed development and associated car parking form the from the east drive and proposed roundabout on the main A905 Airth to Fallin road. However, no structure landscaping has been proposed to screen the development when viewed from the west, Airth Road or importantly to the north, to screen the development when viewed from within the designed landscape.

The indicative masterplan proposes a hedge and wildflower strip to the north of the Visitor Centre. This proposed treatment would not serve to screen the building when viewed from within the designed landscape. An appropriate landscape treatment would be to enclose the building within a woodland block which would be representative of the historic planting within the wider remnant 19th century designed landscape of Dunmore Park.

By analysing the relationship between buildings and planting within the Dunmore Park designed landscape, a relationship between buildings being backed by or enclosed by structure planting is evident. For example, the Dunmore mansion house is backed by substantial woodland to the north of the house. The Home Farm or Stables Block is also backed by a substantial woodland block, as indeed is The Pineapple, which is concealed within a woodland block. The nearest properties to the proposed Visitor Centre, namely The Parsonage and East Lodge are both enclosed on three sides by woodland. Therefore, an appropriate landscape treatment to any proposed building within the estate policies would also be to enclose it within structure planting to reflect the historic approach elsewhere within the designed landscape.

The proposals include the route of an indicative path between the proposed visitor centre and the east approach drive. It is not clear whether pedestrians would be expected to walk along the existing single track unmetalled drive to visit The Pineapple. The proposals would benefit from consideration how they can retain and improve the existing Core Path routes and wider path network. Notably, how to improve connectivity with The Pineapple and walled garden.

Further the Indicative Masterplan merely notes '*opportunities to provide improved pedestrian access to The Pineapple*' indicating that this would be along the existing East Drive. The East Drive is a recognised Core Path Rote Ref. 010/96. The East Drive is an unmetalled single track, with ditches on both sides and no trees for shelter. We would suggest that in order to fulfil the stated aim of improved pedestrian access that there would need to be an appropriately

surfaced, segregated route with shelter provided by trees, with waymarking and seating provided.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Given the proximity of the proposed development, both the Visitor Centre and Dwellinghouses we are both surprised and concerned that there are no visualisations of the proposed developments from within the walled garden, from The Pineapple or the drive adjacent to the walled garden as it exits the woodland.

The report states that the viewpoints were approved by the local planning authority as part of the previous PPiP application (P/21/0110/PPP). We consider both the Visitor Centre and Dwellinghouses would be visible from within the walled garden, notably from the footpath to the pond. Especially, as there is no physical boundary enclosing the south side of the walled garden. Here, limited screening is provided by a narrow shelterbelt comprising mostly of semi-mature broadleaves and Scots pine trees. Whilst we are not able to access The Pineapple, we consider due to the follies elevated location that both the Visitor Centre and Dwellinghouses could potentially also be visible from inside the Category A listed structure.

Therefore, we do not understand why viewpoints were not scoped out on the south boundary to the walled garden or The Pineapple itself.

The report p.8 under 'legislative and planning policy context' states '*while the key architectural feature – The Pineapple is listed grade A, both the residential and visitor centre sites do not impinge upon this or its setting*'. We strongly refute this assumption as the proposed developments are visible from within the walled garden within which The Pineapple is situated.

In Conclusion

We are of the opinion that the proposed Visitor Centre located within the Dunmore Park designed landscape GDL00158 would have a detrimental effect on the setting of the designed landscape, especially when experienced from The Pineapple designed landscape GDL00368.

Further the proposed Dwellinghouses located on Cemetery Road would have a detrimental effect on the setting of both the Dunmore Park and The Pineapple designed landscapes, which are both included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland and therefore assessed by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to be of National significance.

Therefore, SGLH strongly object to the proposals to construction a Visitor Centre to Include Information / Exhibition Space, Arts and Craft Workshop, Restrooms, Café and Retail Area and up to 82 Dwellinghouses and Associated
Works at Land to the west of Brachenber House, Cemetery Road, Airth.

We would be grateful to be included in any future consultations affecting the Dunmore Park and The Pineapple or other Inventory and non-Inventory designed landscapes located in Falkirk Council.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Benians, MA (Hons) CMLI
Chair, Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage conservation@sglh.org

SGLH Conservation Committee
Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage info@sglh.org