

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND JUSTIFICATION FOR ALTERATION

INTRODUCTION

The client's brief was to provide an outdoor swimming pool within the grounds of Erbistock Hall in a manner which would not undermine the historic gardens and park. The pool must be sited sensitively and this must be seen as an opportunity to repair and reinstate key elements of the garden before they disappear. The principal instruction of the clients is to design a layout which maintains Erbistock Hall and its environs in a state which befits its listed status and where feasible repair and reinstate the structure of the original garden which has been slowly eroded over time and is in danger of disappearing.

This document will highlight the design criteria which drove the scheme forward and illustrate the level of consideration, evaluation and evolution which fed back into the final solution. This has required analysis of the key elements forming the original design prepared by a specialist consultant, the later additions whether structural or planting and evaluating their importance and condition. It has necessitated exploring different locations for the pool with surprising outcomes, demonstrating the value of testing the design against a rigid set of principles.

The final scheme therefore employs sound conservation principles in line with ICAMOS as well as the statutory guidance with regard to historic assets in Wales.

THE SITE

Erbistock Hall is a Grade II listed Georgian building (NPRW 27128), largely dating 1720 although the principal elevation facing the garden may be later. It is situated within its own set of farming buildings set back off the lane from Twinning Cottage via Rose Hill to Hillside. It is slightly elevated overlooking rolling countryside and is not overlooked. None of these structures are being altered by the proposal.

Extensive alterations (including the loss of a third storey) to the present day structure of the main house means it is not straightforward to read the building and many internal alterations have diverted extensively from the original layout. Whilst the building maintains its historic character, the heritage value is as much associated with the massing of the building, the garden walls, the dovecote (NPRN 31717) and farmstead behind (NPRN 31718) - unusually close to the main structure and separately listed and it is this collection which the scheme aims to nurture.

The garden is visible on the 2nd Edition O/S map of Denbighshire XXXVI, sheet 13 although elements of the garden are considered to be earlier.

LISTINGS/REGISTER STATUS

1. Parklands & Gardens of Wales No: PGW(C)732003.12.17/RCAHWMW/SLE & CSB
Associated with: Erbistock Hall (Nprn27128), Dovecote (Nprn31717) and Farmbuildings (Nprn31718). J.Wiles 26.11.02
2. CADW Register of Parks and Gardens in Walesⁱ.

BUILDINGS LISTING REGISTRY SUMMARY, CADW

NAME	REF	GRADE	DESIGNATED	AMENDED	HISTORY	REASON FOR DESIGNATION
Dovecote at Erbistock Hall	1578	II*	07/06/1963	13/02/1995	C18 circular brick dovecote dated 1737	Graded II* as an architecturally distinguished composition and an especially well-preserved early C18 dovecote. Group value with Erbistock Hall.
Erbistock Hall	15170	II	07/06/1963	13/02/1995	Early C18 house, probably c1720, altered in c1950s.	Listed as an early C18 mansion which externally retains much of its character. Group value with the dovecote and farmbuilding at Erbistock Hall.
Farm buildings to North of Erbistock Hall	1577	II	07/06/1963	13/02/1995	Possibly contemporary w. Erbistock Hall, built c1720.	Listed for group value with Erbistock Hall and Dovecote.

Following the clients guidance that the old garden must be respected, a survey was carried out by a specialist garden designer who would be able to identify key planting and any elements from the old garden which may still survive. See garden survey plan and notes.

EXISTING GARDEN

The photographs show the transition in the garden and issues relating to dilapidation and general disrepair. A priority within the design criteria has been to identify where the significant losses and/or dilapidations are which can be restored and/repared as part of the scheme. The following table sets this out.

ILLUSTRATIONS	DESCRIPTION	JUSTIFICATION/DESIGN CRITEREA
 VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPH	TOPIARY & SEPARATE 'ROOMS' IN THE GARDEN –EXTENSIVE HERBATIOUS BORDERS. GARDEN NOW STRIPPED OF PLANTING AND TURNED TO LAWN. SHOWSNMAIN HOUSE WITH TOP STOREY IN SITU.	The proposal will reinstate the rooms within the garden. Look to reinforce the axis though the garden, including removal of self seeded ashes, brambles etc., reinstate long grass and orchard boundary. Replanting of orchard along axis.



ILLUSTRATIONS
SHOWING TOPIARY
PRIOR TO THE 1950'S
ALTERATIONS TO THE
HOUSE. MUCH OF THE
HERBATIOUS BORDERS
HAVE BEEN CLEARED

The mid-terrace yew has
been resculpted to low
level. The proposal is to
leave these as existing.



1960'S TOPIARY
REMOVED AND GARDEN
FULLY OPENED UP ON
UPPER TERRACES

The box hedging to the
far side of the mid-
terrace to be reinstated
as part of the scheme.



SOUTH ELEVATION &
GARDEN TODAY

The existing key features
of the garden wall,
dovecote, main house,
and terracing to remain
as existing.



DOVECOTE TODAY

Critically the proposal will
not affect the Grade II*
listed dovecote (nor any
other structure).



VIEW FROM THE HOUSE DOWN THE PRICIPAL PATH FORMS A STONG AXIS, VIEWS OBSCURED BY OVERGROWN SELF SEEDED TREES WITHIN THE OLD ORCHARD. ORCHARD NEARLY COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED. THE LISTING DISCUSSES LONG GRASS AND APPLE ORCHARD WHICH ARE ALSO IN DISREPAIR.

The proposal is to open out the main view through the topiary at the far end of the path. Replant yew to reinstate in time the missing 'mushroom' and reshape the remaining yew tree to the Victorian outline.



THE ANCIANT MULBERRY TREE WITHIN THE WALLED GARDEN IS A SIGNIFICANT AND IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE OVERALL STRUCTURE

This section of the garden must remain untouched and cannot support heavy machinery for fear of soil compaction and/or damage to tree and/or roots.



ANCIENT BOX HEDGING WITHIN THE WALLED GARDEN PROVIDES AN INDICATION OF THE ANCIENT SUBDIVISION OF ORCHARD, HORTICULTURAL LAYOUT ETC. IMPORTANT SURVIVING ELEMENT TO HISTORIC LANDSCAPE.

The walled garden is subdivided by box in good condition. Again no access should be given to heavy machinery nor the character around this unusual pathway.



STEEP GRADIENT TO
WALLED GARDEN
PROVIDES FOR AN
UNUSUAL LAYOUT,
SOUTH FACING

The topography lends an unusual characteristic to this garden which must be maintained if the character of the garden is to be preserved. This provides an early indication that the assumption the pool should be adjacent to the tennis court may be problematic.



PRINCIPAL VISTA WITH
POOR STEPS

As part of the scheme the concept will be to reinforce the vista and repair the steps.

The listing refers to long grass and orchard which are missing/in disrepair. Self seeded ashes, brambles etc have replaced what was once an ordered layout. The proposal is to reinstate the long grass and replant the trees forming the vista in the orchard, mowed path and open out the gateway to the park beyond.

ALTERNATIVE SITING & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

At first glance, it appeared prudent to locate the pool within the walled garden away from the principal building adjacent to the tennis court. The table below illustrates why the walled garden did not meet the original design objectives and the proposed site was eventually identified as the most prudent.

DESIGN CRITERIA	DESIGN SOLUTION	SITE A – walled garden	SITE B Lower terrace
LOW IMPACT DESIGN	The pool is to be sited below ground as this will minimise the visual impact.	A substantial retaining wall would be required in order to level off a suitable area of ground to provide for sufficient surface area for a pool.	The lower terrace allows for a pool to be located to one side of the principal axis and along with low level box hedging the terraces will conceal the pool from the park as well as the house.
PROTECT HISTORICAL ELEMENTS OF THE GARDEN MUST BE PROTECTED	Drawing showing the key structural elements of the garden, views, Contours and unusual structural elements, dated condition noted.	The walled garden is difficult to access due to the structural enclosed nature of the layout. Further complicated by the contours/access and machinery.	All work can be completed without disturbing any of the structural elements of the garden, displacing any walls etc. Once completed it will be discrete and will not be visible.

	None to be disturbed.		
PROTECT HISTORIC PLANTING	A schedule of important elements of the garden was commissioned. An existing planting plan identified the key elements and their condition.	Unusually, the majority of the old plants remain in the walled garden not the principal garden in front of the house. There is potential issues with the yew hedging, the ancient mulberry tree, the box hedging, as well as the existing contours of the land.	No planting remains on the terrace. The terrace lends itself to creating a separate 'room' which follows much more closely the principal of the historic design and the terraces remain intact. The new box hedging reintroduces the concept of separate elements to the garden (lost from opening out the lawns).
BUILDABILITY	Careful consideration to be given to the method of construction, access and how to protect the important elements of the garden during the works.	Access to the walled garden is poor for excavation vehicles. The position of the mulberry tree, the box hedging and yew hedging, the steep inclines all restrict access from below and the walls, tennis court and ancient apple trees prevent access from above.	Access to the terrace by contrast can be contained, managed and mitigated across the 'haha' with temporary works. Safe, monitored access away from principal elements of garden in straightforward. Clear delineation of site/garden.
RESPECT CONTOURS OF THE LANDSCAPE	Part of the unique layout is the response to the natural contours of the land. The terraces in the garden and the South facing planting of the walled garden.	The garden is steep and laid out to exploit the South facing inclines of the walled garden. However levelling off for the provision of a swimming pool will destroy the natural balance.	The terraces have been levelled and formed to provide flat sections of garden. This lends itself perfectly for the adaptation of a swimming pool which requires a level surface.

Having understood the layout of the historic gardens, built features and planting, the principal elements topographical and structural interest, statutory status, the design criteria were established.

The optimum siting, type, size and location, the use of materials can therefore be found according to these prescribed set of principles.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to reinstate a 'room' within the garden, concealed by low planting following the terraces of the old garden, now stripped of any planting and simply lawned. It will remain accessible to the house for amenity purposes and reference the hidden surprises of the old garden.

Supplementing this would be the concept that the principal sight line and axis through the garden based on the path should be reinforced, restored and reinstated where missing.

The design is simple and legible. Pool on the lower terrace, box hedging to the top of the first bank, restore the steps down to the orchard. Replant a row of fruit trees to delineate the path through the orchard, reinstate the grass walk and long grass meadow flowers at this lower level. Remove self-seeded and diseased trees. Reintroduce the gated access to the park at the end of the vista before the gate rusts over. (Gate still in situ. But rusted and overgrown).

EXISTING HARD LANDSCAPING No alterations to existing buildings is considered. Terraces remain as existing including all connecting paths and steps. The design offers the opportunity to restore the stone steps on the lower terrace down to the orchard.

EXISTING SIGHT LINES All sight lines remain as existing. Axis through the garden is strengthened by adding 'rooms', restoring the orchard section of the axis, clearing around the gate (at present overgrown) and hidden. The supporting (in part missing) topiary is to be reintroduced at the entrance to the orchard. The existing topiary where overgrown is reshaped.

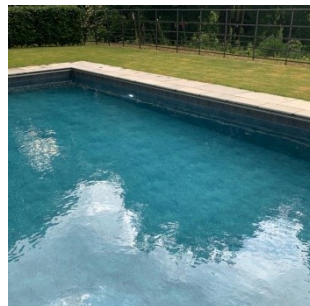
EXISTING CONTOURS RESPECTED No above ground structures to be formed, and despite the sloping landscape the pool can be constructed without changing the existing contours.

USE OF MATERIALS The careful choice of materials and enhanced landscaping around the pool have been carefully chosen to ensure that the aesthetic and material impact once complete is complementary and of little impact.

ADDITIONAL PLANTING Planting will be focused on reinstating and reinforcing the structural elements to the garden without which the garden ceases to exist. Missing and overgrown topiary are to be reintroduced and a new line of box hedging formed at the top of the 2nd bank to reintroduce without mimicking the previous layout where a series of 'rooms' existed.



Restore existing potting shed and locate all machinery inside.



Dark pool lining will imitate a pond.



Simple line of stone coping stone to pool using York stone to match the path.

The proposed design offers the following:

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	JUSTIFICATION
USE OF MATERIALS- YORK STONE AROUND POOL; NO FENCING; DARK POOL LINING	Electric pool cover avoids need for fencing; sandstone paving around pool provides for similar finishes to path stone and similar to a pond finish; dark lining to the pool to keep the visual impact low.	Materials echo the existing. The careful choice of materials provides for an extension of the existing garden conversation in a contemporary family way.
BELOW GROUND ELEMENTS TO BE INVISIBLE	All structural works to be below ground. All pool equipment to be located in the potting shed.	The purpose to keep the pool incidental to the main structure of the garden, echoing a garden

		pond.
NO ADDITIONAL STRUCTURES	The pool should be located adjacent to existing buildings in order that the services can be located within them.	The contours of the original landscape remain.
POOL TO BE SIZED APPROPRIATELY	Maintain a realistic size of pool for the 'room' devised by the scheme. Do not oversize.	See plan, the size of the pool has been reduced to reflect its surroundings.
SITING THE POOL	The siting has been important as described above.	Mid-terrace provided for an opportunity of to carry out important restoration and provide a pool with minimal impact on the existing layout.
RESTORATION OF GARDEN	The garden is in a poor state and elements are in danger of being lost. The proposal will look to identify key elements of structure to reinstate in order to maintain the structure of the garden for future generations to take forward.	Topiary, path, gate, yew hedges, steps all to be reinstated to ensure that the vista – the principal sight line through the garden is reinforced, repaired and restored.
REINSTATEMENT OF SECTION OF GARDEN LOST	Victorian gardens are labour intensive and the intention is not to replicate this however targeted restoration of key elements in order to maintain the structure is desirable.	The topiary in particular can be restored using targeted replanting and careful reshaping of tress which have overgrown through poor maintenance.

METHODOLOGY

A temporary surface will be formed from the haha to the site as shown on the plan. The section of haha can then be restored afterwards in order to leave it in a better condition that found. Spoil will then be removed along the same route. The banks will be cordoned off to prevent damage.

ACCESS STATEMENT

The pool is a garden feature and therefore is exempt from requiring an access statement, however there is a side garden gate which will allow for disabled access and access for all.

Discrete low level lighting will provide for safe access in low light without being seen from the surrounding countryside.

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Cynefin — Welsh tithe maps <http://cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk/>

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Natural Resources Wales (2016) LANDMAP Methodology: Guidance for Wales. Historic Landscape

Parks & Gardens UK is an online resource for historic parks and gardens providing information on UK parks, gardens and designed landscapes and all activities concerned with their promotion, conservation and management. <http://www.parksandgardens.org/>

The National Library of Wales — online access to a range of collections including maps, pictures and photographs. <https://www.llgc.org.uk/>
