**Cambo Walled Garden – Plans and Proposal (Michael Innes)– Garden Team Feedback**

March 2018 Elliott Forsyth and Fay McKenzie

**1 The Brief**

* 1. Agree.
  2. Welcome the opportunity to review the initial plan to produce a master plan for the garden. We feel that once agreed by the Trust, any further garden detail plans and drawings, planting plans should be produced in house by the Garden Team.
  3. Agree, especially important with more formal layouts.

1. **The Current Situation**
   1. We agree with the initial points made here. However, it should be noted that the garden has been in a state of redevelopment over the past two decades. We currently have over 100 different borders to maintain, almost all of which have been rethemed, designed and replanted in house, during this two-decade period. Annually the garden team have designed and developed permanent plantings 6-8 borders both within and out with the walled garden, amounting to over 100 permanent borders. There have also been 12 annual borders, annually designed and planted in this period, which totals over 200 borders. These activities have been achieved with limited human resources with low skill base and on a limited budget. Its noted the garden structures and garden infrastructure have grown tired and need replacement which requires increased investment. We take the point that the areas out with the walled garden are not included in this document.
   2. Agree.
   3. Agree.
   4. Agree.
   5. Agree garden can be improved by revising path structure and some areas would benefit from additional definition such as cobbles, bricks or ideally corten steel edging as frequently used in other professional gardens.
   6. There is agreement that some areas of the garden are tired and need a redesign. These include old woodland border, border directly on the right-hand side through garden courtyard gate, the old cut flower garden and the triangular area by the compost gates. Areas with too much bare ground is noted, such as the double rose border, old woodland and shrub borders, under lilac walkway, wild gardens also would benefit from additional planting. Whilst we would agree there are a few plants e.g. roses in shade, nepeta in shade, leucothoe in winter gardens in dry environment, some plants needing division or are newly establishing and the area adjacent to the new woodland requires planting.
   7. Although the style is consistently naturalistic in many areas of the garden, they represent diverse habitats of the world, all with distinctive plant selections and features. All border in Cambo are currently themed, these include the Woodland Borders, Mediterranean, South African Borders, North American Prairie, Winter Gardens, Woodland to Grassland Transition. There is agreement that adding focussed traditional borders and areas, would further enhance the diversity and extend the season interest. Although there is a balance to be considered here for unity in the garden. There is however a severe lack of interpretation throughout the garden to allow visitors to fully enjoy the theming and diversity of the plantings at Cambo.
   8. Disagree with lack of colour, its noted that Cambo plantings are largely pastel. We agree however additional plantings which are in the hot colour range for example perhaps the potager area, hot borders would benefit from more diversity, the new cutting garden, potentially and redevelopment in front of the glass house would be appropriate places for these additions.
   9. Agree, additions in this area would add increased structure and interest, especially in winter.
   10. Agree to an extent, but the vistas and long views do enhance visitor experience, adding to the feeling of generosity and profusion drawing the visitor through the garden. However, increasing hedging and tree cover is noted as being worthwhile where appropriate, creating a sense of surprise for the visitor. Although it must be noted that this may limit plantings suited to more open aspect causing poor plant performance, requirement for additional staking and so forth.
   11. Agree the range of plants at Cambo can be improved but these should be chosen wisely for high performance, beauty and maintenance requirements should be considered. These should be key to selection criteria for all decisions regarding resources, to ensure the most successful outcomes throughout the garden.
   12. Agree, this is an excellent resource and an area which could be further developed. Vines are now establishing, and the houses have the beginnings of permanent planting and require more investment.
   13. Agree, with note that additional supporting structures are required and could also become features if done well.
   14. Agree.
   15. Agree.
   16. The old woodland and the ribbon beds require additional soil and increased levels of organic matter, however there are drainage issues through the largest ribbon beds leading through the vegetable beds which also need addressed.
   17. Agree.
   18. Agree.
   19. Agree.
   20. Agree some of the fruit areas require replacing and this is in hand with redevelopment in the new Edible garden. Many of the fruit trees although providing character in the garden require extensive renovation or removal due to disease. The vegetable area would be better placed in a different area, which has water points and suited to vegetable growing and future planting of this requires reconsideration to meet our new focus.
2. **General Proposals**
   1. Agree this proposal may add additional interest in the garden. See earlier comment regarding impact of tall hedging on plant performance.
   2. Agree but it is also necessary to consider unity and beauty, to avoid lack of cohesive visitor experience. All great gardens of note, which Cambo aspires to, have an emphasis, tone and a message, too many themed areas may detract from the overall unity, tone and message of the garden. Strength lies in a core identity, it is unrealistic to meet every visitor’s expectations and no garden can be everything to everyone, at all times.
   3. Agree. Additional plants should be chosen wisely for high performance, beauty and maintenance requirements should be considered. These should be key to selection criteria for all decisions regarding resources, to ensure the most successful outcomes throughout the garden.
   4. A reduction in Naturalistic planting would allow more diversity in the garden, however it should be noted that the garden team have observed the gardens visitors enjoy this style at Cambo, very much and often comment on its unique character and charm. However, there is agreement that adding focussed traditional borders and areas, would further enhance the diversity and extend the season interest at Cambo. These should be well thought through and delivered professionally to ensure we reach the same standard as in the naturalistic and winter garden plantings. Although there is a balance to be considered here for unity, identity and much-loved character, for the garden.
   5. Thoroughly agree!
   6. Agree.
   7. Agree the additions of more shrubs, evergreens, hedges, woodland plantings, Mediterranean areas, apple-walk and redevelopment of the traditional areas may increase seasonal interest.
   8. Agreed where appropriate to the individual theme.
   9. Agree, however more traditional plantings, exotic and tender plantings require much higher level of maintenance to perform well. For example, established respected figures from professional literature suggest the following maintenance requirements; woodland planting (7 minutes/metre annually), naturalistic planting (12-14 minutes/metre annually), traditional plantings (25/metre annually), exotic/tender (>30/metre annually). Additionally, increased hedging requires considerable maintenance. Therefore, a balance must be struck between maintenance resources and the nature of proposed themes as they all have implications for our resources.
3. **Garden Zones as per the numbering on the plan**
   1. Woodland Island (1 on plan)– although there is agreement that this area could be redeveloped using this approach, creating a striking first impression. However, a stand of eye-catching *Acer griseum* creates a clear interesting feature in the garden, through a range of seasons, especially in winter. This bed is themed within the woodland habitat and to change it to a more formal box planting may jar within its current surroundings. This type of planting would be more pertinent at the opposite original entrance, where it would be in context.
   2. West Wall Borders (2) – Agree with keeping this theme to woodland planting with inclusion of some larger foliage plants at the back of the border. Disagree with formality of an espalier pear on the back of the border wall, as the style is too contrasting, and the climate is unsuitable for a pear here. However, an espalier pear in the garden courtyard directly behind this wall would be an interesting feature for this area. A change of planting at the north end of these beds (currently blousy border) would be in keeping with the theme of woodland with more suitable herbaceous planting. Agree with change of trellis. Addition of tree would help screen working area but potentially we may need to balance this with something additional at the opposite end of the border.
   3. Ribbon borders, Hot Border (3) - Removal of box hedging agree but needs careful planning as levels differ from path edges and requires re-landscaping, with perhaps a retaining wall. Addition of a hedge in this area would be beneficial, however this would create a very narrow border largely in shade for most of the year. Which makes the idea of the Mediterranean border (3) impractical if a hedge is planted here. Ideally a mixed Mediterranean border would be very suitable replacing the Lilac walk (10).
   4. Greenhouses – (4) Agree.
   5. Greenhouse beds – (5) Agree. One potential idea might be to extend the current South African theme, increasing the plant colour range by using a hotter palate. Care should be taken not to shield the glasshouses with plant choice here to provide optimal conditions in the main propagation house.
   6. Exotic borders (6) – This section is perhaps one of the most controversial proposals in the design. Agree with the initial section of this plan as it is across from the glasshouse, good to carry on the theme here. Removal of rose and creation of a better choice of hedging would create additional interest. Redevelopment of the area which is currently the Calendar border into a more exotic themed area would increase diversity within the garden and would then echo well with the change of theme in the glasshouse beds (5) if the plantings are consistent and well thought out. Following on the current South African bed should be kept and potentially extended into the glasshouse beds, perhaps with a hotter palette as previously discussed. The bridge beds are currently themed to a Mediterranean planting which increases diversity in the garden and should be kept and potentially increased. The areas of herbaceous planting currently in Penny’s Garden and the old Pear House should be retained to guide the eye up to the large double herbaceous borders, as should the potager entrance beds. The double herbaceous borders are iconic and should stay. The hedge proposed for the back of the right-hand side border would be better suited and a better backdrop than the current Prunus.
   7. Small Rose Garden (7) - This does not fit in the South African area but may be more suitable in the current ‘Sandpit’.
   8. Herb Garden (8) – Agree.
   9. Penny’s Garden (9) – Agree. Alpines and small treasures area would be very suitable here.
   10. East Wall Path (10) – Agree with wall section. Agree removal of Syringa walk, however instead of espalier apples, box hedges, the Mediterranean Border suggested for (3) would very much benefit the micro-climate in this area and be a nice compliment to the roses and climbers on the wall. It would also give this area a key May/June focus.
   11. Productive Gardens (11) – Agree. Ideally the area currently hosting the raspberries would make a good vegetable area the soil is more suited to growing at this side of the proposed site than the other. We would propose that a new cutting garden is situated in the east side of this proposal as it is drier and sunnier than the area under the raspberries. It would increase the variety of plants grown in the garden and be an attractive addition to our productive areas. Additions of hedging in these areas would be attractive, providing a good screen from area 12.
   12. The South Path (12) – Agree.
   13. The Naturalistic Garden (13) – Agree, consider changing hedge to Yew.
   14. The Half-Hardy Flower Garden (14) – Agree with the colour theme here being hot, as we have limited areas of hot plantings. However, a more perennial planting with bolder colours and a wider range of hardy exotic plants, with some half-hardy species, including penstemons, agapanthus, crocosmia (basketed!) etc would increase the range of diversity in the garden.
   15. The Apple Walk (15) – Agree. However, rambling roses in these species restricts annual pruning and should be avoided.
   16. The Burn Walk (16) – Partially Agree. Tea House is requiring renovation or replacement, there is a danger of trying to create Japanese features which don’t quite meet expectations and look out of place in a professional garden. However, if these were more authentically replaced they would add an attractive feature to this area, showcasing the burn, the waterfall and the pool. The bridge needs replacement with more suitable materials, but both should stay. The should be supported by extra foundation planting to further enhance this theme. Agree with removal of metal trough! Also agree with Summer House idea for area 18-19, if needed. Agree with removal of cherry trees. Consideration of the trees to replace these needs thought. Management of the grass by the burn in a more informal manner to create a fritillaria lawn would increase habitat type and charming interest in the garden. The reduction of maintenance in this area is welcomed as the banks at present are hard to mow.
   17. The Central Rose Path (17) – Agree.
   18. The Orchard (18) – Disagree. As previously discussed this area is now one of the most accessible in the garden at its entrance, it is required for several functions, it has a large footprint, an important part of the mid to late season interest currently and requires significant discussion and redevelopment. Central focal point here could be the sun dial or perhaps an open summer house for shelter if the current Tea House is removed.
   19. Wedding Lawn (19) – Agree in principle if the area is developed in a manner which befits the garden style and contemporary themes. A robotic mower would add a bit of character here. The addition of the new entrance is exciting and makes a legible approach for the wedding guests.
4. **Other Considerations**
   1. Agree.
   2. Agree paths should be more uniform and defined, materials more suitable to Cambo are bricks, setts and corten steel. Timber is unsuitable in our environment. Box hedging or a suitable substitute for the central new rose axis would be attractive.
   3. Agree in principle.
   4. Agree, if services are possible, these are to be put in discreetly and service area 11.
   5. Agree this area needs more embellishment to link with the garden and deal with the uneven surfaces, however low planting and perhaps an espalier pear, winter flowering quince etc might be more suitable. Planters a good idea as is a Japanese Maple as this area is very sheltered or a more tender attractive multi-season tree.
   6. Agree.
   7. Agree.
5. **Final Summary**

The proposal has highlighted many interesting aspects for redevelopment. The addition of hedges, more central rose axis, increasing the colour palette, removal of tired domestic structures would revitalise several areas of the existing garden. Loosening areas such as the central grass burn walk with softer elements and will increase diversity as it also provides a much-needed reduction in maintenance. Some aspects of this proposal such as the removal of the double herbaceous borders and surrounding planting is unnecessary. However, formalising the productive areas are welcomed and will enhance areas currently functional but not aesthetic. Also, removing standing areas to the other side of the walled garden is sensible as it has no aesthetic value and reduces the areas for display to the public. It is important to maintain the contemporary style and character at Cambo whilst embracing a wider range of plants and themes. The addition of more traditional elements in the garden has the potential to enhance the current displays if these are designed with the future in the forefront of our minds. Finally, there needs to be a balance struck between redevelopment where these potential changes require higher maintenance. Therefore, the future maintenance requirements due to the resource and skills base currently at Cambo.