

GARDEN MUSEUM



Design Brief: Interpretation Design Consultancy

Project: 'Benton End Revived' – Renewal and Reimagination of a Historic Arts and Horticultural Site

Client: The Garden Museum

Location: Benton End, Hadleigh, Suffolk

Funded by: The National Lottery Heritage Fund (the Heritage Fund)

Project Budget: £4.9 million (target), including £2.9 million from Heritage Fund

Contract Period: Development Phase, with potential for extension into Delivery Phase

1. Project Summary

The Garden Museum is seeking an experienced Interpretation Design Consultant, or team of Consultants, to collaborate on the renewal and redevelopment of Benton End, a Grade II* listed Tudor property with significant artistic, horticultural, and social heritage. The goal is to transform Benton End into a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable arts and learning centre, reimagining the radical spirit of Sir Cedric Morris and Arthur Lett-Haines's art school and garden legacy.

This commission covers both the Development Phase and, subject to funding and performance, the Delivery Phase of a National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported capital project. The Interpretation Design Consultants will collaborate closely with the architects, client team, project manager, stakeholders and wider consultant team throughout.

2. Project Vision and Objectives

The redevelopment of Benton End seeks to:

- Conserve and restore the Grade II* listed house and associated gardens structures
- Create inclusive and accessible facilities for learning, exhibitions, and residencies
- Respect and celebrate the site's layered heritage, including its significance in queer history
- Embed sustainability and environmental responsibility in all design choices
- Enable operational and financial sustainability through a mixed-use business model

3. Scope of Services

The Interpretation Design Consultants will plan and deliver positive visitor interactions with the material culture within Benton End House and will be responsible for the following:

A. Development Phase

The Interpretation Designer shall be responsible for the design and coordination of all interpretive and permanent exhibition elements, including exhibition layouts, object displays, display cases, graphics, and wayfinding.

Alongside the Lead Architect and Multidisciplinary Design Team, the Interpretation Designer shall advise on space requirements for temporary exhibitions and specify requirements for specialist exhibition lighting, audiovisual (AV), and IT installations, to be integrated by the relevant specialist consultants.

The Interpretation Designer shall develop the exhibition and interpretation concepts, coordinate with the wider design team, and define technical requirements for exhibition infrastructure and associated specialist systems.

- Research the story of Benton End, Cedric and Lett, and the 'cast of characters' who inhabited and visited Benton End between 1939-1983
- Develop interpretive narratives and themes that reflect the site's multiple stories: artistic innovation, horticulture, queer heritage, cooking and learning
- Lead audience consultation and co-creation workshops, particularly with underserved groups (e.g. LGBTQIA+ people, visually impaired people, young people)
- Research, design and develop a flexible Interpretation Strategy in alignment with:
 - Development Phase milestones; with a draft strategy ready at the mid-development phase (RIBA stage 2) and a final strategy ready to submit with the Delivery Phase application (RIBA stage 3)
 - Sustainable practice and sustainability goals of the client team
 - Accessibility best practice for Museums and heritage sites and the client team's guidelines
 - Target audience and an agreed co-curation model
- Research and identify a range of interpretive media and experiences (e.g. physical exhibits, audio, tactile materials, digital content, artist commissions) and find best solutions based on feasibility assessment
- Advise on low-intervention and conservation-sensitive interpretive approaches suitable for a Grade II* listed building, and gardens, taking sustainability into consideration
- Work with the architects and multi-disciplinary team to identify locations for interpretive installations
- Produce concept and CGI design visuals, mood boards, and sample content
- Fully cost proposed interpretive elements and integrate them into the wider capital budget with the support of the project manager
- Support the Heritage Fund Delivery Phase application through the production of visuals and strategy documents

B. Delivery Phase (Subject to Funding)

During the delivery phase (RIBA Stages 4–7), the Interpretation Designer shall develop detailed designs, content, and specifications for all interpretive elements and exhibition

installations, supporting implementation and coordination with specialist lighting, AV, IT, and other consultants as required.

- Test and refine interpretive outputs with target audiences
- Appoint and manage suppliers
- Oversee the installation of interpretation onsite, ensuring quality and accessibility
- Advise on permanent funder acknowledgement.

4. Interpretation Themes to Explore

The consultant will draw on existing and Development Phase research (including the Conservation Statement, Activity Plan, Garden Significance reports, and pilot feedback) to shape interpretation, covering themes such as:

- The life and work of Sir Cedric Morris and Arthur Lett-Haines
- The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing
- The garden as a pioneering naturalistic, creative space
- Benton End's place in queer and alternative history
- Disability and access (in the widest sense) during Cedric's lifetime and today
- Art and nature as tools for wellbeing
- Contemporary responses and residencies that continue the legacy

5. Audiences

Working alongside project consultants, key target audiences for interpretation include:

- Local Hadleigh residents (including low-income households and families)
- Young people and students
- LGBTQIA+ individuals and groups
- People with mental health needs or neurodiversity
- People with visual impairments
- Visitors from national audiences engaged with art, gardening and heritage

Interpretation must be accessible, inclusive, and sensitive to the multilayered identity of the site, while being delivered with sustainable materials.

6. Collaboration and Interfaces

The Interpretation Design Consultants will draw on the Conservation Management Plan as a key document. There will be scope for some close collaboration directly with the Consultant(s) that produces this plan. The Interpretation Design Consultant will also collaborate with:

- Conservation-accredited building architect, multidisciplinary team
- Landscape Architect / Designer
- Quantity Surveyor
- Activity Planner
- Business Planner

- Evaluation Consultant
- Fundraising Consultant
- Project Manager
- Client team: Benton End and Garden Museum staff, local volunteers and community groups

The Interpretation Design Consultants will engage with heritage advisors to ensure consistency with listed status

7. Timeline

Development Phase: April 2026 – August 2027

Milestones:

- By August 2026: Majority of consultants recruited and begin work on project
- By September 2026: Interpretation tenders assessed
- By October 2026: Interpretation Design Consultant appointed and begins work.
- December 2026: Client review and sign-off for RIBA stage 2
- March 2027: Development Phase Review with the Heritage Fund
- May 2027: Client review and sign-off for RIBA stage 3
- August 2027: Delivery phase application submitted
- December 2027: Decision from Heritage Fund

Delivery Phase: 2028 – 2031

8. Budget

The overall project cost is £4.9 million including VAT

- The maximum fee available for the Interpretation Design Consultants is £20,000 excl VAT for the Development Phase and a maximum of £40,000 excl VAT for the Delivery Phase. This includes travel and expenses. The consultant is expected to be onsite regularly.

The construction / installation budget for interpretation design in the Delivery Phase is £100,000 excl VAT

Design fees should align with appropriate benchmarks for projects of this scale and complexity

9. Submission Requirements

Please provide the following to the Project Manager, James Mellish, via james@jmenvironmental.co.uk by **5pm on Friday 31st July 2026** (in no more than 20 pages):

- Company/Consultancy profile and relevant credentials
- Three examples of comparable projects (preferably Grade II* or equivalent)
- CVs of key personnel

- Methodology and approach to delivering the scope
- Proposed team structure and sub-consultants
- Fee proposal for Development Phase
- Provide an outline fee proposal for the Delivery Phase, clearly setting out costs associated with copyright, image sourcing, copywriting, and other third-party services.
- Timeline and availability
- Confirmation of insurance. Public Indemnity cover of at least £1 Million. Public Liability Insurance of at least £1 Million. Employer Liability Insurance if applicable. Or please confirm that you would obtain these levels of cover if appointed.

Clarifying questions should be submitted to james@jmenvironmental.co.uk by **5pm on Friday 17th July 2026**. All questions submitted by the deadline will be responded to directly, and published on the Garden Museum website once the deadline has passed.

10. Tender evaluation / weighting

Selection of the successful consultant(s) will be based on:

- a) Proven example(s) of recent, similar work at an equivalent project value and heritage significance (25%). Page limit 6 sides of A4. Please note this will represent the first sift and tenderers not meeting this requirement will not progress further
- b) CV including previous roles and responsibilities, and any relevant experience not covered by the above. (15%). Page limit of 4 sides of A4, including any supporting imagery
- c) Methodology, including any commentary on the proposed Development Stage programme (20%). Page limit of 4 sides of A4, including any supporting imagery
- d) Understanding of the brief, assessment of key issues and how objectives will be met (10%). Page limit of 4 sides of A4, including any supporting imagery
- e) Value for money i.e. lowest quote (30%)

11. Decision making process

Tenders will be assessed and moderated by members of the Garden Museum Senior Management Team and at least one trustee.

Shortlisted candidates may be invited to interview.

A final evaluation report with a recommended appointee will be submitted to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for approval.

12. Appendix

'Benton End Revived' Procurement Guidelines; containing further information and appendices relevant to the project