

Annual Review

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB TRUST REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2023/24

Welcome to Our Review of 2023/24!

We hope that this will be the first of a new annual publication, complementing the Annual Report and Accounts with a more detailed view of the work of the Trust and its staff over the past year. Please do let us know what you think of it.

Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust was established by residents in 1968 on the demise of its successor, with a specific remit to preserve and maintain the character and amenities of this unique place. We do this in two ways; by regulating development through the Scheme of Management; and by managing our own land and properties for the benefit of residents. Nearly all of the Trust's work in 2023/24 came under one or other of these broad themes.

With the Covid pandemic now thankfully behind us, 2023/24 saw a return to a more normal pattern of work for the Trust, with several staff changes allowing a better use of resources, particularly to support the increasing estate activity. Indeed, the green estate became one of the major focuses of the year, as we show later in this review.

Applications for Trust Consent to alter properties tend to follow wider trends in the housing market, but levels of activity for both leasehold and freehold applications ended the year in line with predictions. Much of the Trust's work in this area comprises informal advice and guidance before or during applications. This goes far beyond what local authorities can offer, but it ensures that changes are well designed and sympathetic to the historic fabric of the Suburb.

Hampstead Garden Suburb is one of a select number of historic planned estates across the UK and beyond. As an internationally recognised example of the best residential architecture and planning of the early 20th century, the Suburb is well placed to share good practice and learn from other such estates. We hosted a number of visitors in 2023/24, and we ran several well attended walks and talks to promote aspects of the Suburb.

The Trust's financial position continued to improve in 2023/24. In effect, the Trust manages two budgets: the Scheme of Management, which must balance each year: and its own funds. These latter funds pay for all the work that does not fall within the Scheme, as well as supporting a proportion of the Scheme costs themselves. 2023/24 saw the Trust's funds end the year narrowly in credit, shaking off the historic deficit that has dogged the Trust's finances for many years.

The Trust depends on its expert staff to operate effectively, whether public-facing or behind the scenes. Much of this work goes unseen, but it ensures that residents can be assured of speaking with a human contact, rather than an algorithm. We highlight some typical days in the life of staff later in this review.

Finally, it has been my pleasure to lead the operation of the Trust through the past year. The Suburb is a special place, valued by its residents, and we must always seek to balance the issues of the moment with the longer-term benefits of maintaining and preserving the Suburb's historic character for the benefit of everyone. I hope you find our review a useful insight into the ways we have addressed this in 2023/24.

Simon Henderson, Chief Executive Officer



The Trust office; Inset: Simon Henderson

Keeping the design quality – an eye for detail



The Trust planning team is responsible for the stewardship of the Suburb's built environment, including reviewing applications and advising architects, contractors and residents about maintenance and alterations to their properties.

In October 2023, Architectural Adviser Michael Tutton retired from the team after many years at the Trust. Calum Orr replaced Michael as the new Architectural Adviser in a full-time role, with Alice Porter joining the team as Architectural Support Officer towards the end of 2023.

Throughout the year, we continued to help residents achieve a good result for the work to their property, maintaining the high design standard of the Suburb as a whole. Advice given on site, particularly by the Trust's Architectural Consultant, Monica Knight, was important in encouraging good workmanship in everything from repointing to whole extensions.

The planning team is unusual in that it offers free pre-application advice to residents on potential work to their properties. Every member of the team assisted in this throughout the year. Advising residents on the feasibility of their plans before the application process starts prevents frustration and delay further down the line.

We also strengthened our approach to dealing with breaches of the Scheme of Management during the year. Site visits allowed us to agree remediation where problems emerged while construction was still in progress. We avoided the need for enforcement through court action this year through successful negotiation with owners after explaining the purpose and powers of the Scheme of Management.

Two particular trends continued to create challenges this year. While some applications showed a good understanding of

Suburb architecture, we continued to see a deterioration in the general standard of drawings, particularly where an on-line drawing company was used in preference to a properly qualified architect. Poorly surveyed and inaccurate plans take increasing time to resolve while we negotiate better quality drawings and explain what is inaccurate or unacceptable.

This is exacerbated where residents decided not to retain their architect to oversee construction. We are increasingly seeing owners attempting to run their own project, risking indecision and expensive or abortive work and confusing the contractor. This in turn takes up more of our time in resolving unacceptable work. For all but minor work, we strongly advise retaining a qualified professional to oversee applications from start to finish.

To aid consistency in decision making between the Trust and the London Borough of Barnet, we continued to meet with their planners and conservation officers. Barnet and the Trust share the same Design Guidance and it is helpful for residents if both organisations apply this consistently. We discussed a number of individual cases as well as advances in specific areas of building conservation, such as new heritage window systems.

Looking to the future, we worked with a specialist environmental engineering consultancy to provide the best current advice on retrofit for historically sensitive properties. The new retrofit guidance will be launched this autumn to help residents understand how their homes can be made more energy efficient and comfortable.



The planning team reviewing site visit photos

A day in the life

The Trust's Architectural Consultant, Monica Knight

As a member of the Trust's Planning team, my day begins by collecting the relevant files, correspondence, drawings, photographs and other information we hold relating to properties and any existing applications. There follows a full morning of site visits all across the Suburb, meeting with homeowners, prospective purchasers, builders, architects and contractors to discuss potential alterations, and review ongoing work.

The replication of the use of traditional building materials and detailing is key to achieving a seamlessness to the changes to Suburb properties, and these on-site discussions are crucial to help achieve this.

A typical day might include signing off repair work to a pair of fire damaged properties on Hill Top, where the entire roof structure and dormers to both had to be replicated to match the original, followed by a visit to a contractor to agree a pointing style and mix for a repointing of a Listed property in Heathgate, and then on to a property in Denman Drive inspecting completed works to a small rear bay window extension.

The afternoon is taken up by compiling visit notes and downloading and labelling photographs, and then the morning's visits are discussed with the entire planning team – including reviewing the photographs – to ensure consistency in our feedback and advice, drawing upon the combined decades of experience of working with Suburb properties and heritage construction methods generally, always weighing up the work in line with our published Design Guidance.

It is a great privilege to spend so much time, in all seasons, in the Suburb at large and to experience both the beautiful, considered landscape planning and varying individual house designs, at close quarters.



Supporting Suburb life

Part of the Trust's charitable remit is to support Suburb organisations that contribute to the life of the Suburb and benefit its residents. We were pleased to make our largest ever overall award of grants to local groups in 2023/24, reflecting the value we place on their contribution to the social fabric of the Suburb.

Within the total of £34,070, we awarded the following grants during the year:

- **Brookland Junior School PA**
£500 to provide new PE equipment
- **Garden Suburb Infant School**
£1,000 to provide new safety training bikes
- **Garden Suburb Theatre**
£1,000 to assist with chair and toilet hire, licence fees and rehearsal space
- **Proms at St Jude's**
£5,350 to support the concert programme and Family Day on Central Square.
- **Northway Garden Organisation**
£1,370 to support the continuing restoration and maintenance of Northway Gardens and Fletcher's Garden
- **HGS Archives Trust**
£1,300 to support their accommodation and storage costs.
- **HGS Fellowship**
£850 to support their Autumn Music chamber concert series
- **HGS Free Church**
£5,000 to support improvements to the church hall heating
- **HGS Heritage**
£1,000 to fund young interns working on the Virtual Museum.
- **HGS Residents Association**
£500 towards additional play equipment
- **St Jude-on-the-Hill PCC**
£15,000 to support essential repairs
- **Youth Music Centre**
£1,200 to support their annual Concerto Prize for young musicians.

This wide range of interests notwithstanding, we are still keen to expand the scope of our grant-giving, and we particularly welcome applications from under-represented or new areas of areas of Suburb social activity.

Spreading the word – communicating our work

Much of the Trust's work is essentially communicative, both within the Suburb to residents and others, and beyond its boundaries – to local and national bodies, and to the international community of which the Suburb is part. This activity is not always prominent, but it forms an essential role in our ability to maintain and preserve the unique character of the Suburb.

We received well over 5,000 calls from residents and others over the year, on a wide range of subjects, often involving further investigation or research. At a time when organisations are increasingly turning to automated (and often unhelpful) response systems, we are committed to maintaining personal access to our expert staff, whether by phone, email or in person. This ensures that often complex queries can be fully understood and responded to.

We are always considering how we can improve our own communications with residents. *Trust Times* is now in its second year, and its mix of news, features and information seems to be appreciated. This Annual Review is a further step towards a more open presentation of the Trust's activities, and we have further plans for 2024/25.

The Trust's annual Winter Lecture has always been an opportunity to open up particular aspects of the Suburb and its history in an entertaining and informative way with an expert speaker. Mindful of the growing interest in the effects of climate on the environment, we took a new direction this

year by inviting two experts on the green environment to talk about "Trees for the future".

Dr Samantha Dobbie from the Birmingham Institute for Forest Research at Birmingham University presented her team's research into the effects of increased levels of CO2 in the environment on mature trees (essentially, they get fatter and put out bigger roots). Keith Sacre, from Barcham Trees gave an equally compelling presentation on selecting resilient trees at a time of climate change. Their audience greatly appreciated the generosity with which they shared their expert knowledge, and this will in turn inform our own approach to creating climate resilience in our green environment.



The winter lecture



Calum Orr leading a walk



Simon Henderson's Proms Walk

© Kate Webster

Trust staff must necessarily be experts in their fields if they are to offer the best advice, whether to residents or a wider audience. Guided walks allow us to reach both groups, and to demonstrate our own passion for the Suburb and the people who created it.

The Proms at St Jude's Heritage Walks are always well attended, and we were again pleased to lead three of these in June 2023, raising funds for Proms and its own beneficiaries. Joe Mathieson, Architectural Adviser, showed how the Suburb was home to several of the progressive intelligentsia in the inter-war years: Paul Capewell, our Communications Officer, led a (literally!) entertaining walk on the Suburb's role in film and television; and Simon Henderson showed how Raymond Unwin's planning of the Suburb was influenced by the oak trees that dominated the pre-Suburb landscape.

Also in June, Calum Orr, Architectural Adviser, led a walk for the London Festival of Architecture on "The architecture of community in an Edwardian Suburb". Joe and Calum additionally hosted the Bartlett School of Architecture on an educational tour of the Suburb, as part of their course.

We supported the annual Open House Festival across London with several walks. Calum reprised his earlier walk, Joe's walk on "Streamline in the Suburb" revealed the Suburb's Modernist-style houses to a new audience; and David Davidson, Head of Architecture, showed how Raymond Unwin's progressive social ideals informed his planning of the Suburb in "The sharing of great things".

We also maintained important links with our fellow historic estates. In April 2023, David presented a paper to the European Garden City Congress on the Trust's approach to retrofitting heritage buildings; and we spent a productive day in October with the Dulwich Estate team in Dulwich Village, a similar but much larger Scheme of Management estate.

We are sometimes asked to give talks to other organisations. Paul was invited by the National Trust to share his enthusiasm for Charles Wade, one of the Suburb's more original architects, with the staff and volunteer curators at Wade's own Cotswold home at Snowhill in January. Paul has already written about Wade's work on the Suburb, and he was pleased to share this with an appreciative audience.

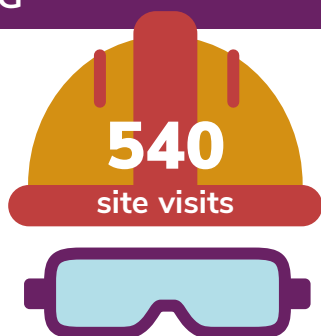
From Gloucestershire to Brazil! Perhaps our most far-flung request for information came from Professor Dr Jose Geraldo Simoes Jr of the Architecture Department of Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie, Sao Paulo. In response to his request, we were able to help Prof. Simoes understand the issues around the maintenance of conservation areas and the lessons from our own experience. The reputation of the Suburb is indeed global.



Paul Capewell delivering a talk on Charles Wade at Snowhill

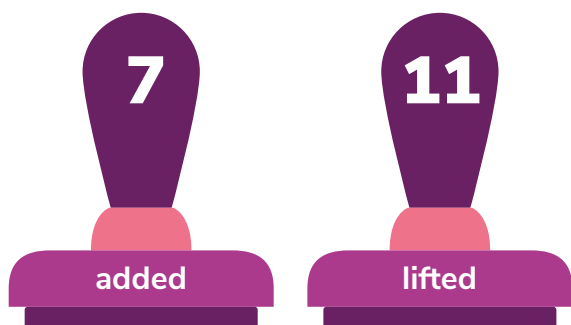
The Trust's Year in Figures – 2023/24

PLANNING



Site visits

We carried out 540 architectural site visits to help people like you make sympathetic and appropriate alterations to their properties. See page 9 for a day in the life of Monica Knight, who carries out the majority of our site visits.



Infringements

We always seek to enforce the Scheme of Management through discussion and negotiation with residents, whether through the application and construction process, or the reinstatement of unauthorised alterations to Suburb property. This is particularly the case where a new application is received for work on a house with an existing infringement. A realignment of staff duties in-year has strengthened the Trust's approach to infringements.

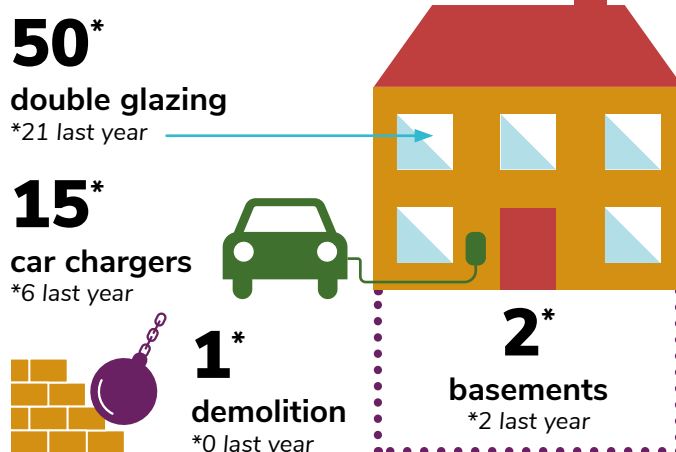


Applications for Trust Consent

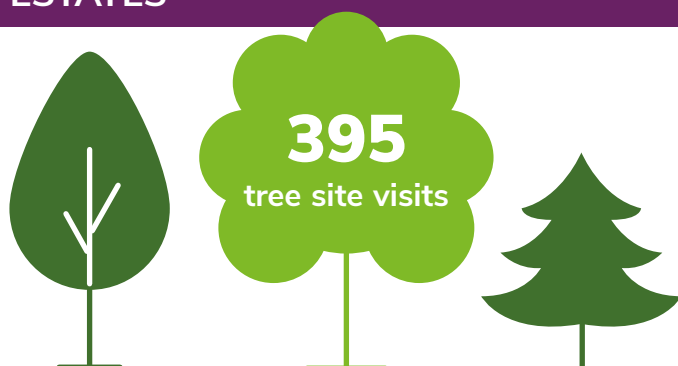
Applications for Trust Consent vary in their complexity, but all require careful processing and a dialogue with our planning staff. Below is a breakdown of some of the broader types of applications we've received. Although the total number is down on last year, some types of application saw an increase in 2023/24.

*214 last year

Applications by type



ESTATES



Trees and hedges

With the retirement of consultant Anthony George and the hiring of Frank Hawkins as Green Estate Manager, we've brought our arboricultural role in-house. This has led to a more joined-up approach to inspecting trees and hedges, as well as an increase in the number of available tree appointments. See page 11 for an insight into what Frank gets up to.

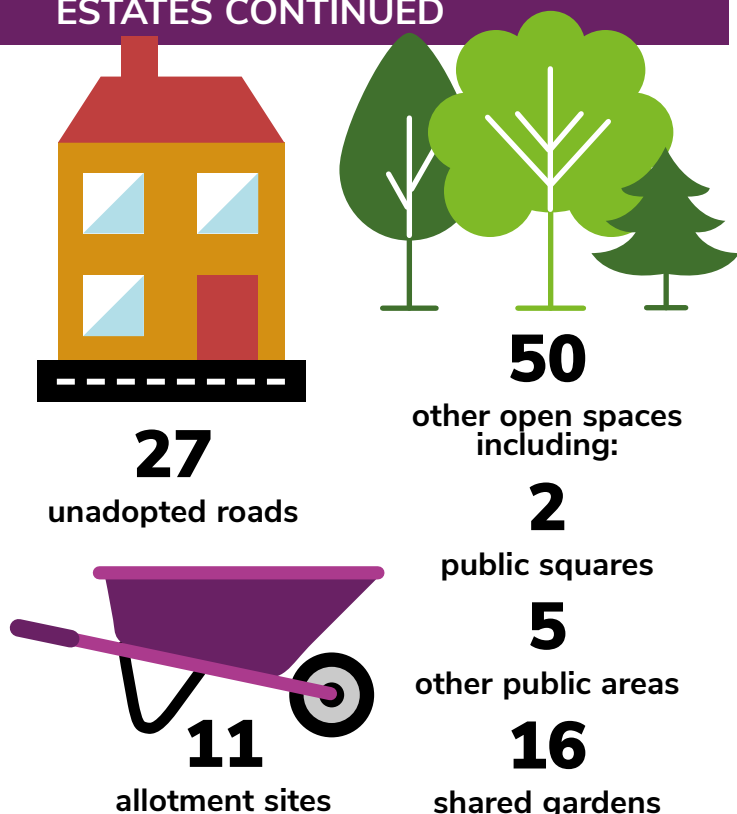


Tennis courts

The continued popularity of our two tennis courts on Central Square in 2023/24 means they remain a priority as an amenity provided by us to Suburb residents. We've taken on board feedback around abuse of the existing booking system and implemented a new one, and we've now installed gates to restrict access to those with bookings.

*765 cancellations

ESTATES CONTINUED

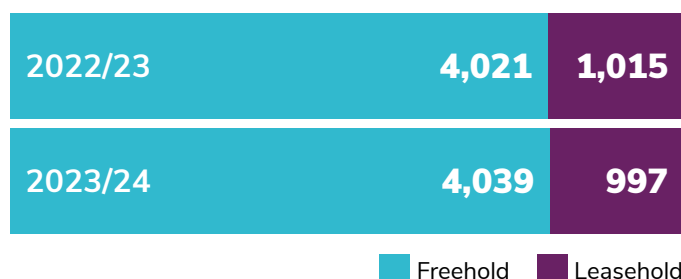


Common or shared land ownership

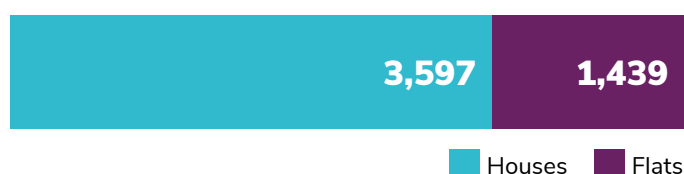
Around 80% of Suburb residential properties are now enfranchised freeholds and pay the annual Management Charge. Of the remaining 20%, most are held on long leases from the Trust as ground landlord, either directly or, in the case of many flats, through a head lessee. These pay a fixed ground rent to the Trust.

In addition, the Trust owns a number of shared or communal areas, including unadopted roads and shared gardens, public squares and greens, allotments, tennis courts, twittens and other green spaces. Shared roads and greens are maintained by the Trust at the expense of the adjacent properties, while the upkeep of the main public areas is paid for through the Management Charge as a benefit to all.

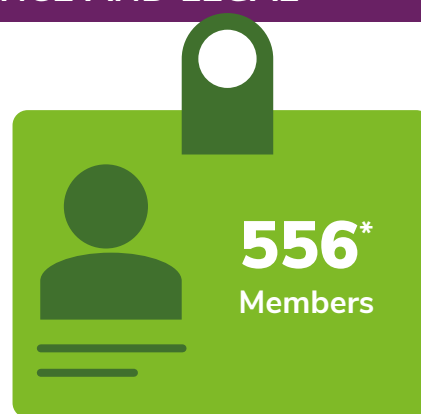
Freehold and Leasehold Properties



Proportion of houses and flats



FINANCE AND LEGAL



Trust Membership

Membership of the Trust is not compulsory, nor automatic. Payment of the management charge is not the same thing. Membership is voluntary, free, and open to anyone resident on the Suburb – members do not need to own their own home.

Trust Membership is a sign of support for what we do – see www.hgstrust.org/membership for more info, and to sign up today.

*44 associate

Our financial performance in 2023/24

The value of the Trust's general unrestricted reserves grew by £508,483. After stripping out the £528,295 surplus on freehold sales, licences and variations and the net losses on investments of £24,369 there was an operational surplus of £4,557. This surplus reflects the fact that annual running costs did not require the support of one-off sales of assets in 2023/24. £3,738,364 is held in the Trust's general fund. £137,900 is held in restricted funds intended to be held for the long term as the foundation of the Trust's future income. Funds designated by the Trust Council total £3,442,183. These resources comprise £3,177,050 in property assets and £265,133 of cash on deposit.

You will find a full breakdown of the Trusts' Annual Accounts for 2023/24 in the Trust's published Report and Accounts, sent to all Members.

Independent Auditors' Report

The Auditors Report from Menzies LLP is included in the Trust's published accounts as above. We are however pleased to confirm that the audit was successfully completed, and the above financial information is consistent with the financial statements in the trustee's Annual Report accompanying the Accounts.



Behind the scenes – who we are and what we do



*Back row L-R: Alice Porter, Paul Capewell, David Davidson, Richard Ross, Simon Henderson, Calum Orr, George Izzo, Joe Mathieson
Front row L-R: Poppy Hitchin, Frank Hawkins, Susan Samuels*

While the Trust's financial, legal and property responsibilities might be regarded as routine business, their efficient operation is essential in maintaining our more public functions.

Property matters

The Trust is frequently approached by conveyancing solicitors for information on properties in course of sale, as part of their searches. This can take time to collate, and we therefore instituted a formal conveyancing pack process for a set fee in 2022. This proved popular, and we saw a further increase in demand this year, although we still find the occasional property being sold in ignorance of the conditions on it or the arrears on its account.

To reinforce our contact with sellers and purchasers, we now send letters to all owners we know to be selling their properties, reminding them of the requirement under the Scheme to let the Trust know the date of sale and name of the purchaser. We then send a Welcome Pack to all new owners, introducing them to the Suburb and the Trust.

The Trust owns 27 unadopted roads serving closes and squares. These were lightly built in the Suburb's early days, and several are now showing their age, particularly with the heavy weight of modern vehicles. While upgrading the construction would be the ideal solution, the cost of this falls on the residents served by the road, and we have had to strike a balance in repairing several such roads this year. This will continue to be a challenge in future years, as these roads approach the need for reconstruction rather than continuous repair.

Managing our finances

Overall, the Trust's financial position continues to improve year on year. Effective management of its own assets, combined with increasing rental income, finally lifted it out of the long-term deficit on its own funds that dogged previous years, once asset sales are discounted. Our medium-term aim is to grow this presently small surplus into a substantial improvement fund, while keeping an adequate level of reserves to cover the Trust's legal obligations and risks.

The Trust has always held a small number of properties itself, the rents from which contributed to its own funds. Since 2014, we have invested the proceeds of asset disposals in a growing portfolio of small residential properties on the Suburb, now comprising 11 flats and two houses. We bought two of these in 2023/24: one is now let, and the other is undergoing refurbishment. We will continue to acquire properties as funds allow, progressively removing the risk of future deficits.

As noted earlier, the Trust in effect manages two budgets: the Scheme of Management and its own assets, holding both in trust, for Charge payers and all residents respectively. The Scheme funds remain the property of charge payers until spent, and any surplus must be returned as a rebate on the following year's Charge: the converse applies for any shortfall, although this has not been necessary in recent years.

The Scheme budget runs from April each year but the Charges cannot be sent out until the previous year's accounts have been audited and signed off in July. As expenditure runs ahead of

Balance sheet at at 31 March 2024

	Notes	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2023 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets:			
Freehold and long leasehold estate, at cost	10&11	38,615	40,335
Furnished property, at net less depreciation	11	258,021	366,103
Estate assets, at cost less depreciation	12	3,046	6,093
Investments:			
Property investments, initially at cost subsequently at fair value	13	5,237,500	4,340,000
Other investments	14	265,134	259,624
Total fixed assets		5,902,316	5,012,055
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	15	206,609	242,344
Cash at bank and in hand		1,429,891	1,897,356
Total current assets		1,726,500	2,139,700
LIABILITIES			
Creditors, amounts falling due within one year	16	(310,369)	(342,288)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		1,416,131	1,797,414
TOTAL NET ASSETS OR LIABILITIES		7,318,447	6,809,469
REPRESENTING THE FUNDS FOR THE CHARITY			
Unrestricted funds:			
General fund		1,881,367	1,881,367
Quintessential		5,437,080	4,928,102

Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Annual Report and Accounts For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Statement of cash flows for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Year ended 31 March 2024 £	Year ended 31 March 2023 £	
Cash flows from operating activities	132,525	266,999	
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Rental and other investment income	325,769	248,833	
Proceeds from the sale of investments	1,620	1,350	
Purchase of investments	(921,868)	-	
Net cash generated/(used) by investing activities	(594,469)	(250,187)	
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period	(461,955)	(517,182)	
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	2,156,980	1,639,798	
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	1,695,025	2,156,980	
NOTES TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENTS			
	Year ended 31 March 2024 £	Year ended 31 March 2023 £	
Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities:			
Net income for the reporting period	423,051	663,915	
Depreciation charges	11,129	11,129	
Loss (Gain) on investments	24,369	(90,000)	
Rental and other investment income	(235,769)	(248,833)	
(Decrease)/increase in debtors	(54,265)	37,936	
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	54,010	(97,148)	
Net cash provided by operating activities	132,525	266,999	
Analysis of cash and cash equivalents:			
Cash at bank and in hand	1,429,891	1,897,356	
Short term deposits	265,134	259,624	
	1,695,025	2,156,980	
Analysis of changes in net debt			
	At 31 March 2023 £	Cashflow £	At 31 March 2024 £
Cash and cash equivalents	2,156,980	(461,955)	1,695,025
	2,156,980	(461,955)	1,695,025

The notes on pages 26 to 38 form part of these accounts.

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Limited (a company limited by guarantee) – Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 25

This year also saw the completion of a modest realignment of staff roles, to make better use of resources and improve working practices. “Assistant” posts have been abolished and all staff now have their own areas of work, whether architecture and planning, estates management or business support.

Into the last category come our external communications, our internal financial administration and, not least our “front of house” contact. We handled an enormous number of calls for residents and others in 2023/24, many on matters beyond the Trust’s area of control. Where we could not assist, we redirected callers to organisations better able to help, including local councillors, Barnet Council or the Residents’ Association. We particularly appreciated the assistance of Cllrs Rohit Grover and Michael Mire in helping to resolve matters that fell outside the Trust’s remit.

Cyber security became an ever-increasing threat during the year, with a number of phishing attacks successfully warded off in early 2024. Our external IT support company provide a much higher level of protection, with all email now backed up remotely and secured by two factor authentication, and regular on- and off-site backup of other data. We maintain cyber insurance against costs arising from loss of data.

Managing our business

The Trust is a small but relatively complex organisation. Despite increasing demands on staff time, we have maintained staff numbers at the same level since 2015. Our accountancy, legal, independent property valuation and IT support is provided by external consultants, but we brought arboricultural advice back in-house in 2023/24, as noted above.

income the Scheme can notionally fall into debit against receipts.

It is therefore all the more important that Management Charges are paid as promptly as possible after billing. Although we send out quarterly reminders, around 18% of properties had not settled their accounts by the end of the year.

Chasing arrears is costly and takes staff resources away from more beneficial activity. Where residents had genuine difficulty in paying the Management Charge in 2023/24, we were able to set up twenty payment plans and arrange an assistance grant. In twenty cases of persistent non-payment, we had to seek payment through the courts, but this is always a last resort.

The Trust must necessarily budget conservatively for potential legal costs, as we have no other way of enforcing compliance or defending decisions. We again successfully avoided the need for court action in 2023/24 through successful negotiation with those concerned and better contact when properties change hands, although we have had to resort to legal letters on occasion.



Nurturing the green environment

One of the Suburb's defining characteristics is its green spaces. Whether private gardens, semi-private areas such as our allotments, or the public amenities of Central Square and Sunshine Corner - all are aspects of a single green environment, subject to the same climatic and human influences, supporting the same wildlife, and contributing equally to the health of the Suburb's ecosystem. This is doubly important in a time of climate change, and 2023/24 saw several aspects of the Suburb's green environment come to the fore.

After many years as the Trust's external arboriculturist, Anthony George retired at the end of 2023. Tony was well known to many residents, and his expert advice on trees and hedges was greatly appreciated.

Tony's retirement did, however, give us the opportunity to bring back our green advice service in-house. We were very pleased to appoint a highly experienced new Green Estate Manager, Frank Hawkins, in August 2023. Frank took on the green advisory role in January 2024, doubling the number of appointments and adding his own considerable expertise to our offer.

One of the main challenges facing the Suburb green environment is the increasing number of demands from insurance companies handling subsidence claims to fell mature healthy trees. These include "Unwin Oaks" – the pre-existing field oaks that Raymond Unwin planned much of the original Suburb around.

We have usually refused consent where a healthy tree can be shown to be a positive contributor to the character and amenity of the Suburb, and where a practical alternative solution exists to protect both house and tree. We were pleased to see LB Barnet taking a stronger line in their own consent process, and we appreciate the strong support of the HGS Residents Association Trees and Open Spaces Committee in objecting to such applications.



Central Square tennis courts



Central Square

Having taken back Central Square into Trust ownership in summer 2022, we have now begun to make some modest improvements to its care. The frequency and quality of grass cutting was increased, the scaffolding pole railings round the Free Church steps were replaced with a more characteristic yew hedge, and the short flight of steps opposite Henrietta Barnett School was replaced with a ramp to improve accessibility. Three new memorial benches have been installed to replace those lost over the years, paid for by residents.

The Central Square tennis courts also received attention, at the request of players. Misuse by dog trainers, gym groups, commercial coaches and others, together with unused bookings, were all reducing the availability of courts in peak periods. We therefore changed our booking system to key-code access, allowing us to keep the court gates locked when not booked. Bookings will remain free through the summer months, but we intend to introduce an inexpensive booking fee in autumn 2024, to further discourage speculative booking. The income from this will be ring-fenced to improve the courts.

The neglected land below Central Square was the subject of much interest in autumn 2023, including a number of suggestions for its future use from residents. We too wish to see this area rehabilitated as an amenity for Suburb residents, and we have committed to developing plans in consultation with residents and other landowners over the coming year.

The Trust employs an external gardening contractor to maintain both the public areas and the various shared private greens and gardens serving groups of houses, some 50 communal open spaces in all. We re-tendered the contract competitively to eleven companies over winter 2023 and re-awarded the contract to Jonathan Gordon Ltd on a 12-month contract. We were however disappointed in the low number of returned tenders, and we plan to re-tender the contract again in winter 2024.

A day in the life

The Trust's Green Estate Manager, Frank Hawkins

As the Trust's Green Estate Manager, my day begins by reviewing any new and unexpected emails which might need a quick response or forward planning, or circulating to relevant parties. I look at the diary and the site visits booked in, and review the historical correspondence, drawings, photographs, and other information we hold relating to these properties and any existing reports.

I then have a morning of site visits all across the Suburb, meeting with homeowners, tenants, and tree surgeons to discuss the proposed tree works and review seasonal or future work. These visits also allow for several other issues to be examined - issues raised by house owners on the visit, or fortuitous unplanned meetings whist out and about which require Trust attention.



My remit whist carrying out visits and interactions with homeowners and their contractors is always guided by the Scheme of Management operated by the Trust.

The Trust's Memorandum and Articles of Association state that:

The objects for which the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust is established are to do all things possible to maintain and preserve the present character and amenities of that area situate in the Greater London Borough of Barnet and known as the Hampstead Garden Suburb

Similarly, the Scheme states that:

The Scheme is made for the purpose of ensuring the maintenance and preservation of the character and amenities of the Hampstead Garden Suburb

The wide and varied remit can include tree management, removal, disease, pruning, future planting proposals, hedge management, and allotments. There is also the ongoing maintenance of sites under Trust control, such as Central Square, which not only relates to trees but also to lawns, flower beds, paths, and tennis courts. All these works vary with the seasons, which bring varied and challenging issues.

The afternoon is taken up by compiling visit notes and downloading and labelling photographs, and then sending out reports to the house owners/contractors. All letters are checked to ensure consistency in our feedback and advice, and this is where our good record-keeping and copies of historic correspondence from previous visits can be so helpful.

The exciting thing about being on the Suburb is you never know what the day will hold. As a tree hugger and landscape devotee, I feel lucky to be working here, enjoying not only the landscape but the fantastic colleagues I work with and the variety of Suburb house owners who add another dimension to a fascinating job.

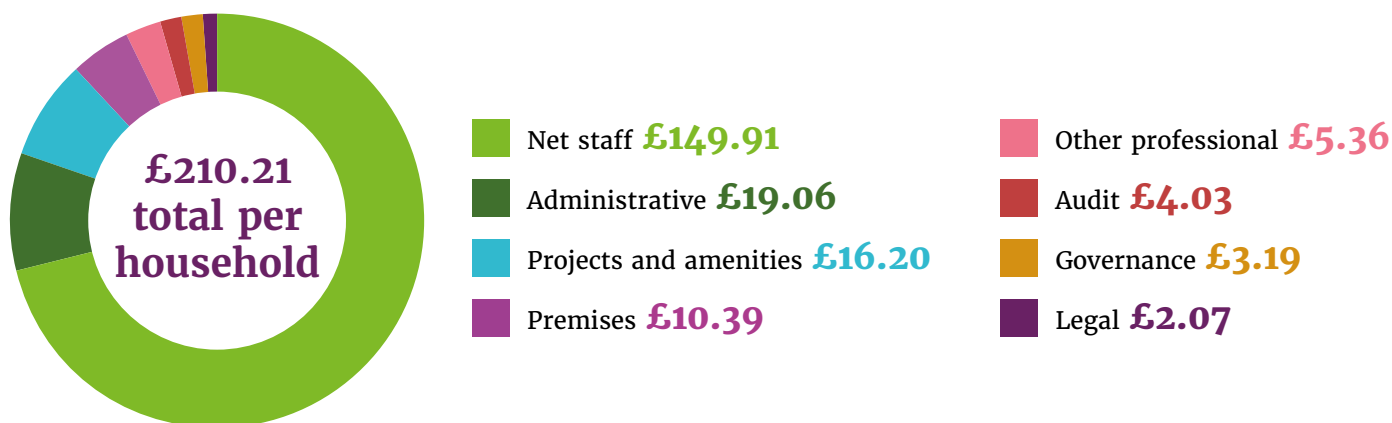
Our plans for 2024/25

During the coming year, we plan to undertake a number of project and other activities. These include:

- Launching the Trust's new Retrofit Guidance for Suburb houses
- Further improvements to Central Square, including reinstatement of all benches and refreshing the flower beds
- Preparatory work to scope out possible future uses of the land between Central Square and Willifield Way for public amenities.
- Repairing part of the Great Wall
- Refurbishment of one public tennis court and introduction of a pay-to-use booking system
- Awarding up to a total of £25,000 in grants to local organisations
- Supporting Proms at St Jude's and London Open House with six guided walks, and holding a new Winter Lecture.
- Improvements to one or more allotments
- Purchasing an investment property to further reinforce the Trust's financial resilience
- Electing a new trustee, and appointing a new Trust Chair and Chief Executive Officer



2023/24 Management Charge breakdown



Income and expenditure under the Scheme budget for the year were the equivalent of an actual charge of £210.21 per household, based on the median number of chargeable properties in the year ended 31 March 2024. This is below the estimated charge of £217.92 per budgeted enfranchised property and the equivalent of a rebate to charge payers of £35.07 per actual enfranchised property for the year ending 31 March 2025. This will be set against the estimated charge for the year ending 31 March 2025 when the Management Charge bills are sent out in August 2024.

This year's Management Charge

The Scheme of Management for the Suburb was approved by the High Court in 1974 "for ensuring the maintenance and preservation of the character and amenities of Hampstead Garden Suburb". All current owners of enfranchised properties are required to pay an annual Management Charge as a contribution to expenses of the Trust in operating the Scheme. This charge is applied at the same level to all enfranchised properties.

The Management Charge is made up of two elements; the estimated cost of operating the present year's Scheme of Management, and a rebate or excess comprising the difference between last year's estimated Scheme budget and the actual costs incurred that year.

Because the funds in the Scheme of Management can only be used for this purpose, any excess belongs to Charge payers and must be returned to them. No funds come to the Trust itself and they must be accounted for separately from the Trust's own funds.

The estimated Management Charge for this present year 2024/25 is £217.29, less a rebate of £34.29 for last year. This gives a payable charge of £183 per property, compared with £164 in 2023/24. The chargeable year runs from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Why is the Charge different from last year?

As both the estimated budget and actual expenditure are subject to the circumstances of their respective years, the sum actually payable can vary significantly between years.

Although the estimated charge for 2024/25 is £2.65 less than last year, expenditure in 2023/24 was nearer the budget allowance, resulting in a smaller rebate.

However, the payable charge still falls within the broad band set by Trust Council in 2018, equivalent to £152-£209 per unit at 2024 values. The overall increase in both the gross and payable charge over the five years since 2020 also remains below the rate of inflation.

What does the Management Charge pay for?

The Management Charge pays for the cost of operating the Scheme of Management in any one year. These costs include:

- Regulating changes to the built and green environments of the Suburb;
- Advising property owners and their agents on maintenance and permissible alterations;
- Maintaining communal areas under its ownership;
- Providing specialist advice on trees and hedges
- Developing relevant policies and practical guidance;
- Enforcing Scheme controls, if necessary through legal action; and
- Covering the Trust's own direct costs for managing the Scheme.

The costs of the Scheme for the year past are set out on the last page of the Annual Report and Accounts.

Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust

Residents are welcome to contact the Chief Executive, Simon Henderson, on any aspect of the Trust's work.

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