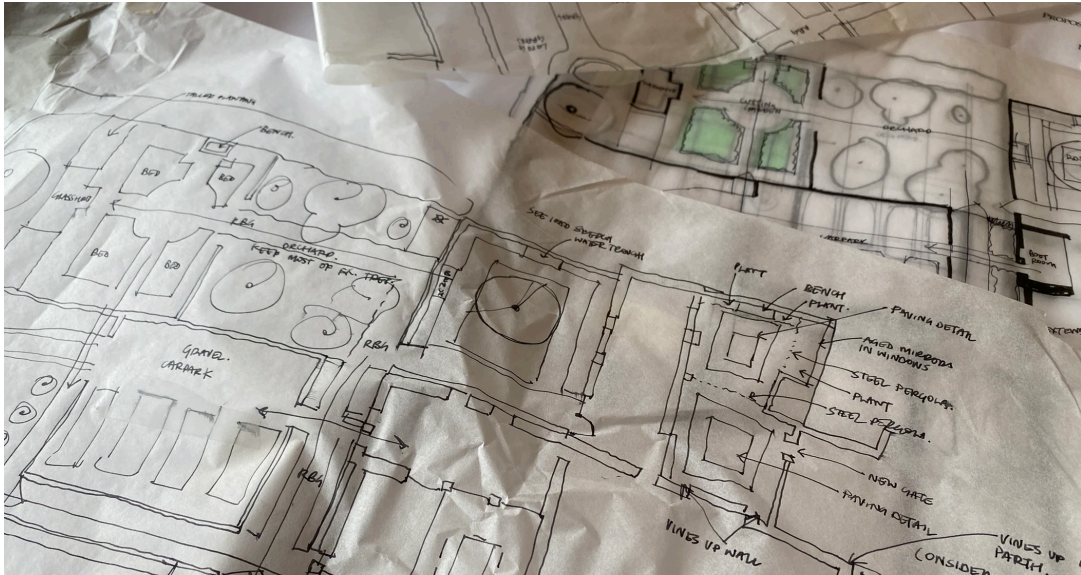


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The Garden Dispatch

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Back to the Drawing Board

Welcome to November's edition of The Garden Dispatch, our semi-regular memo on the workings at Studio Elwes. This month, as temperatures outside plummet, we find ourselves largely ensconced in the office planning for the months ahead. As it happens, most of our projects are at the early design stage which is a great excuse to get out the drawing board and the pens and really focus on the designs.

When it comes to designing gardens, the process, for me at least, is 90% problem solving and 10% creativity. When you have analysed the existing space and taken on board the natural strengths and weaknesses of the

landscape, the correct approach will often become apparent very quickly. A major factor will always be the client's desires, and one would be a fool to ignore them, however, it's important to really consider what it is that the client is asking for. Sometimes, what they want and how they express it can be two very different things, for example, clients often want an expansive lawn, whether that's in a tight urban setting or a sprawling country estate, but what does the lawn really represent? Usable space, soft terrace or just open expanse. Suffice it to say, it's important to read the landscape as clearly as you might read the client.



Fresh plots to cultivate

We've recently begun work on a rural project near Chippenham. The house is an old barn conversion sited within 5 or so acres of stunning open landscape. The views towards the south are spectacular, however, the garden itself lacks cohesion. The previous owner's approach to the garden seems hesitant given the scale of the adjacent vista. We hope to correct this

with a bold approach, while remaining true to the agrarian home at the heart of the design.

The new scheme, albeit at a very early stage, attempts to split, what is currently, one large open lawn, into multiple, usable spaces that each provide something new and interesting but most importantly a reason to explore the garden. One of the challenges we often face with gardens, whether they're large or small, is that one needs convincing to explore the space. Its human nature to take the path of least resistance so it is our job to enable the client to want to move through the space easily and reach areas that they wouldn't do naturally. In this instance, we are using long axis, which the garden rooms hang off. These axes form long views that tempt you to explore.

The image above is from Houghton Hall in Norfolk. I chose this image as it's a garden I find infinitely inspirational. The walled garden in particular is a labyrinth of hedges and planting and gives its guests endless possibilities.

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