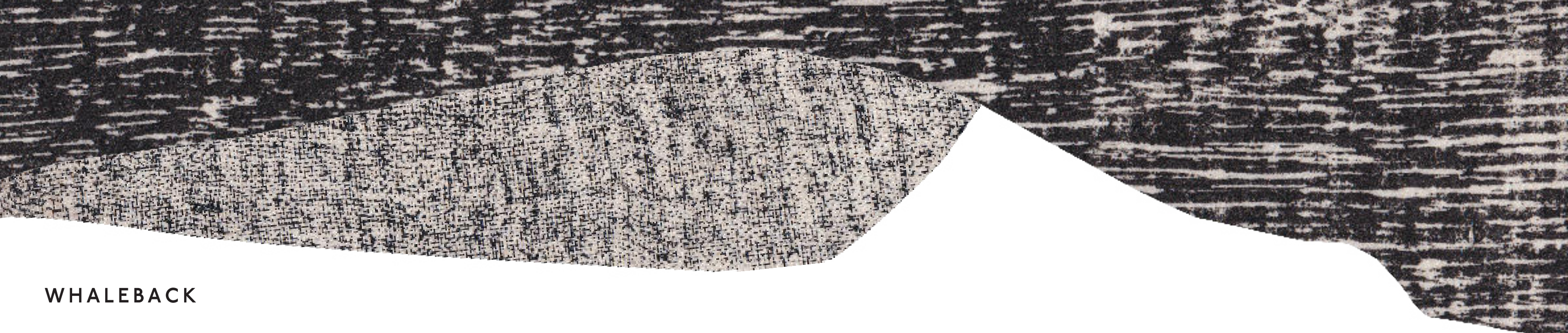




WHALEBACK

HERITAGE AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Borde Hill South Park Section 73 Planning Amendments

ADDRESS

Borde Hill, Borde Hill Lane
Haywards Heath, West Sussex
RH16 1XP

DATE

November 2025

REVISION

1

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Introduction

Whaleback is instructed by the Borde Hill Garden Charity to prepare and submit a Section 73 (s73) planning application to vary planning conditions attached to permission DM/24/0433 as they relate to the South Park, part of the Grade II* Listed Historic Park and Garden of Borde Hill, and the nearby undesignated Sugworth Farm.

The proposed variations seek to amend the approved drawings for development within the South Park, to compartmentalise the site-wide requirements of several pre-commencement and pre-occupation conditions, and to amend opening hours secured by planning condition.

The proposed design revisions can be summarised as follows:

- Relocation and extension to the approved adventure play area
- Minor design revisions to the approved community hub (‘Eco Lodge’)
- Revisions to the approved pathway network within the South Park
- Revisions to the soft landscaping scheme and associated works

The planning application supports the improvement and enhancement project known as ‘Reinventing Borde Hill’, which is an estate-wide plan to revitalise Borde Hill by providing a dynamic, accessible and ecologically thriving hub for the local community, as well as enhancing the heritage significance of the place and its unique botanical collection. It will unlock 110 acres of the listed South Park to new and diverse audiences, while protecting and enhancing the biodiversity and unique botanical collection for future generations.

This Planning Statement describes the existing site, its built, historic and natural environmental context. The proposed revisions are then summarised before the relevant planning history and planning policy framework is presented. A planning appraisal is provided to consider the merits of the application, followed by a conclusion.

A Heritage Statement is also included identifying the heritage significance of the site, with the impacts of the proposed revisions on heritage significance addressed in the Planning Appraisal section of this statement.

This document should be considered in relation to the submitted plans (Erect Architecture and Hortus Collective) and the following reports:

- Botanical Walkover File Note (Arbtech)
- Revised Biodiversity Net Gain Metric and File Note (Arbtech)
- Updated Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Arbortrack Systems)



Grade II* Listed Borde Hill Registered Park and Garden - South Park

Background

Nestled in the Sussex countryside, Borde Hill boasts a rich history dating back to the 16th century. Once the Borde family Estate, it transformed in the late 19th century under the vision of Colonel Stephenson R Clarke, who passionately collected plants from all four corners of the world to establish a nationally important plant collection across the estate. Today, managed by the Stephenson Clarke family as a charity, Borde Hill offers a blend of landscaped gardens and sprawling, natural parkland.

Across the 17 acre formal Garden, visitors can explore ornamental ‘garden rooms’, each with its own unique character. Beyond the cultivated Garden, the historic Parkland unfolds, dotted with mature trees, including rare varieties and exotics. Borde Hill boasts one of the largest collection of privately-owned champion trees in the country.

The ‘*Reinventing Borde Hill*’ project is a testament to the Stephenson Clarke Family’s commitment to the conservation of the Registered Park and Garden. They consider Borde Hill in centuries, not decades; this long-term strategic view enables the delivery of improvements and conservation management in a more cohesive manner, ensuring that change has the interests of future generations at heart.

Borde Hill hosts a nationally important collection of rare plants and trees with a rich cultural and biological heritage. The Grade II* listed status of the Park and Garden recognises this heritage significance and the family are committed to planning for the future while safeguarding and enhancing these heritage assets for generations to come.

The aim to ‘*reinvent*’ Borde Hill’s South Park as a thriving destination for the 21st Century while honouring and celebrating its rich and important botanical history will be achieved through a broader appreciation of heritage via learning, engagement and wellbeing activities. This will include the provision of new facilities in the South Park and Sugworth Farm, as initially approved under permission DM/24/0433, which will offer a series of educational and community programmes to engage a new and diverse local audience.

This project has been supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the granting of the original permission finalised the approval process for second-stage National Lottery Heritage grant funding, with funding to be released in tranches as different elements of the approved scheme progress.

Borde Hill Garden Charity’s vision encompasses the enrichment of the natural environment, fostering connections, and celebrating the rich legacy for future generations.

South Park and Sugworth Farm will become a thriving, inclusive hub where history, nature, and community connect seamlessly. Honouring the unique botanical tradition, the Family aspire to integrate innovative, sustainable spaces for year-round exploration, learning, and well-being, for the engagement of both visitors and local people.



Paradise Walk within the historic core of Borde Hill

Site and Surroundings

OVERVIEW

The Borde Hill Estate comprises over 2000 acres immediately due north of Haywards Heath in Mid Sussex. 155 hectares of the Estate is designated as the Grade II* Registered Park and Garden (RPG) of Borde Hill, set within the High Weald National Landscape.

The botanical collection is a late 19th Century creation by the Victorian Gentleman and plant collector, Colonel Stephenson R Clarke, and the development and preservation of his original theme at Borde Hill has continued through five generations up to the present day.

Borde Hill Place is a Grade II listed building dating from 1598 with a substantial 19th century east wing; it has undergone a series of repairs and restoration in recent years. The House is at the core of the Registered Park and Garden, supported by picturesque stone lodges, stable yards and other traditional buildings. It is surrounded by splendid gardens, open parkland and woodland, containing native and exotic trees.

Borde Hill today is a place where people live in the many rented flats and cottages and also work in converted former agricultural buildings. It is also a place for recreation and leisure with the Garden and associated playground, and cafe open to the public each season from February to December.

LOCATION AND CONTEXT

The RPG of Borde Hill is situated to the immediate north-west of Haywards Heath, on the west side of Borde Hill Lane leading northwards to Balcombe village.

The 155ha RPG, comprising approximately 9ha of ornamental Garden, is set within wooded parkland. The House is positioned at 92m Above Ordinance Datum (AOD) on an east to west ridge, which falls away northwards to undulating ground and southwards to a low-lying east-west stream valley, before rising to a modest crest of 85m AOD on the southern boundary. The stream valley is partially occupied by manmade lakes at 60m AOD, with the main waterbodies in this location known as Harry’s Lake and Robertsmere Lake constructed in the 1990s. They are positioned at the base of a minor spur on the east side of a Greensand landform that rises to its peak of 115m AOD at Whitemans Green, one mile to the west. The underlying geology comprises a mixture of sandstones and mudstones.

This southern half of the RPG (known as South Park) is bounded along the east and south sides by Borde Hill Lane and Hanlye Lane respectively and partly enclosed by a dense mixed tree belt (along the east boundary) and by intermittent trees (to the southern boundary). To the north and east, the parkland and woodland merge into the adjacent undulating, wooded farmland.

Public Bridleway 56CR starts from the western end of Hanlye Lane, continues northwards through Lullings Farm before turning eastwards past Borde Hill Garden and the visitor car park.

The application site also includes an area outside of the RPG to the east side of Borde Hill Lane known as Sugworth Farm and excludes the Grade II listed Sugworth Farmhouse. The total area of the application site is approximately 33

hectares.

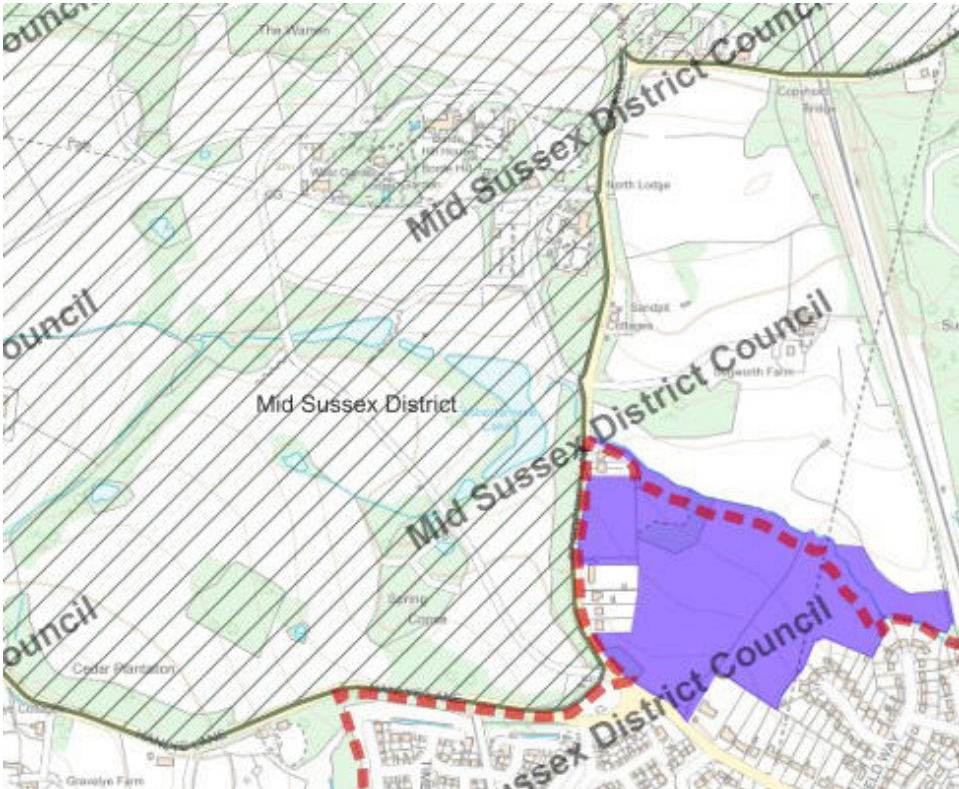
South Lodge (also Grade II Listed) is located within the application site at the south-eastern entrance into South Park and is occupied by a staff member of the Borde Hill Estate. Entrance gates with stone piers can be found beside the two-storey, sandstone and tile-hung South Lodge, leading to a track running north-westwards across the park.

Other neighbouring properties closest to the application site are the row of detached and semi-detached properties to the east side of Borde Hill Lane, the recently constructed Redrow housing estate to the south and the Grade II Listed Sugworth Farmhouse.

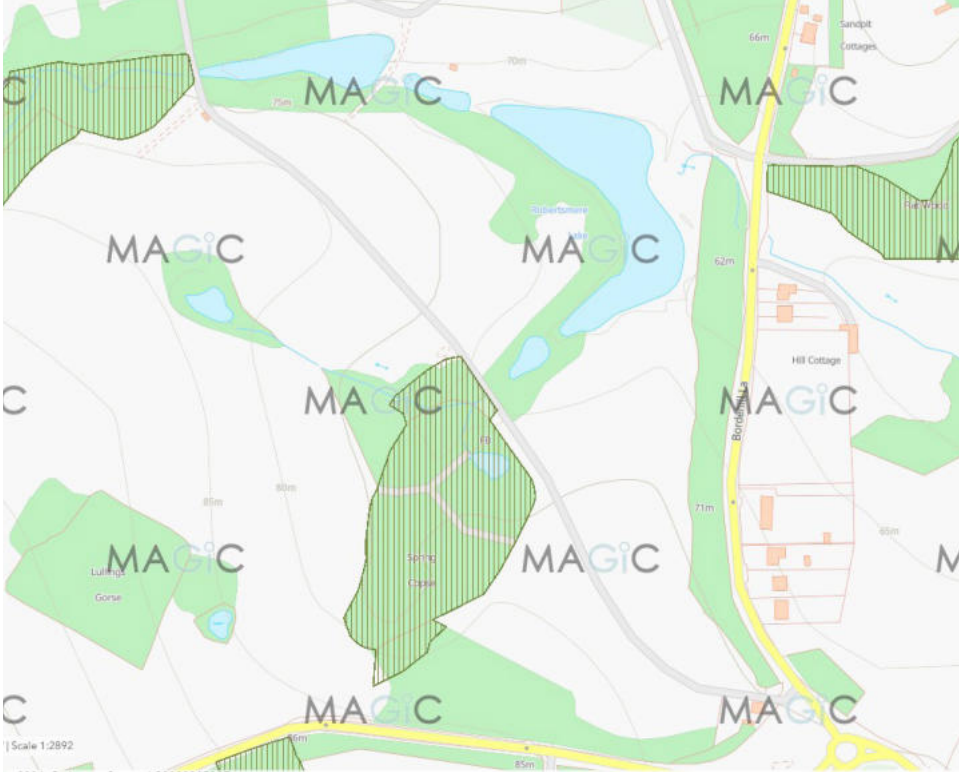
PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

The application site is outside any built-up area boundaries and is therefore in a countryside location for planning policy purposes.

The RPG portion of the application site is within the High Weald National Landscape and also contains Spring Copse, an ancient and semi-natural woodland referred to as ‘Dinosaur Wood’ in the application submission material. Dinosaur Wood occupies a linear dip in the landscape, with the topography steeply rising to its western and northern-western sides.

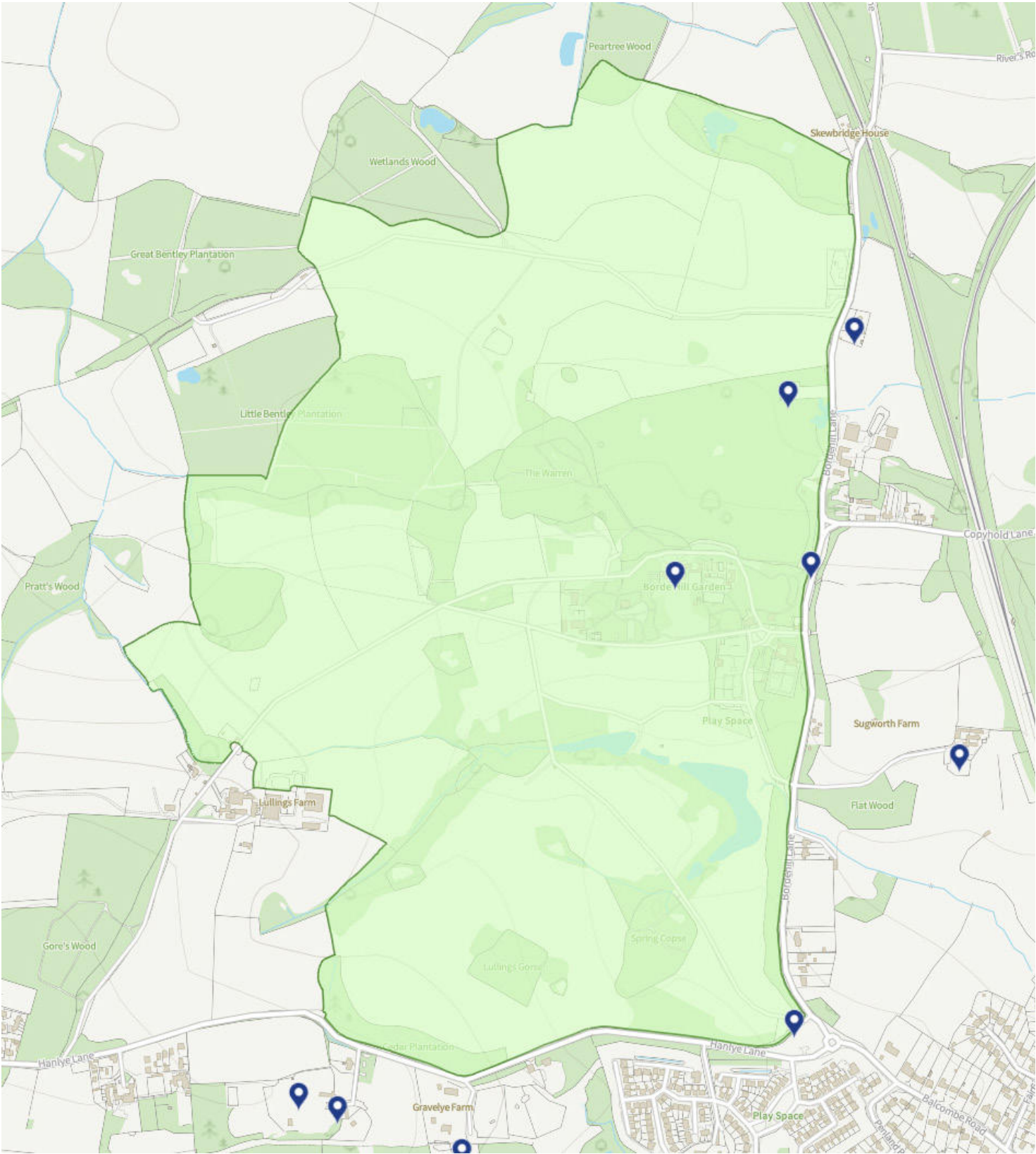


Part of the application site is within the High Weald National Landscape (green hatch) and is wholly within a countryside location (red dash denotes settlement boundary)

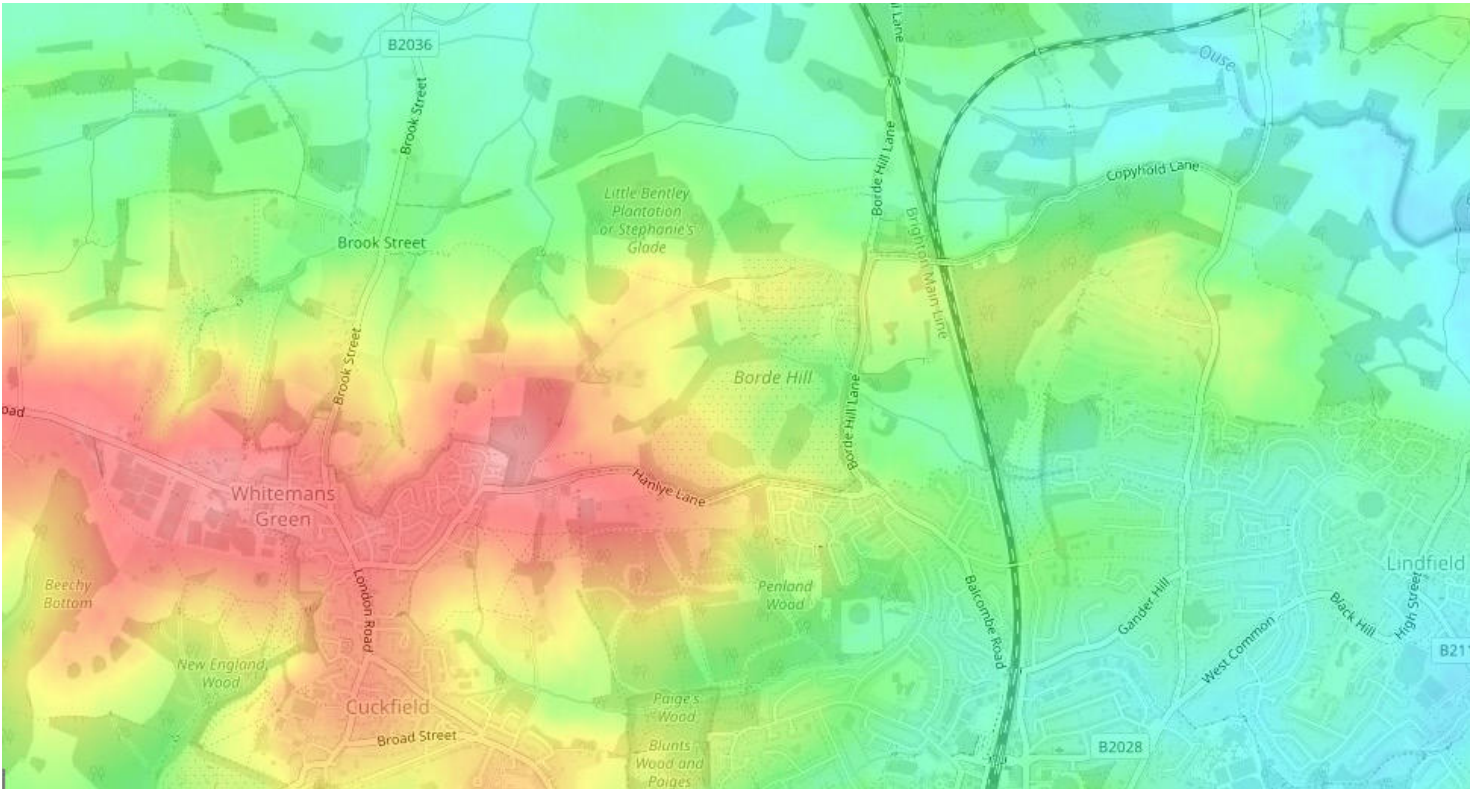


The ancient woodlands of Spring Copse (Dinosaur Wood) - hatched green

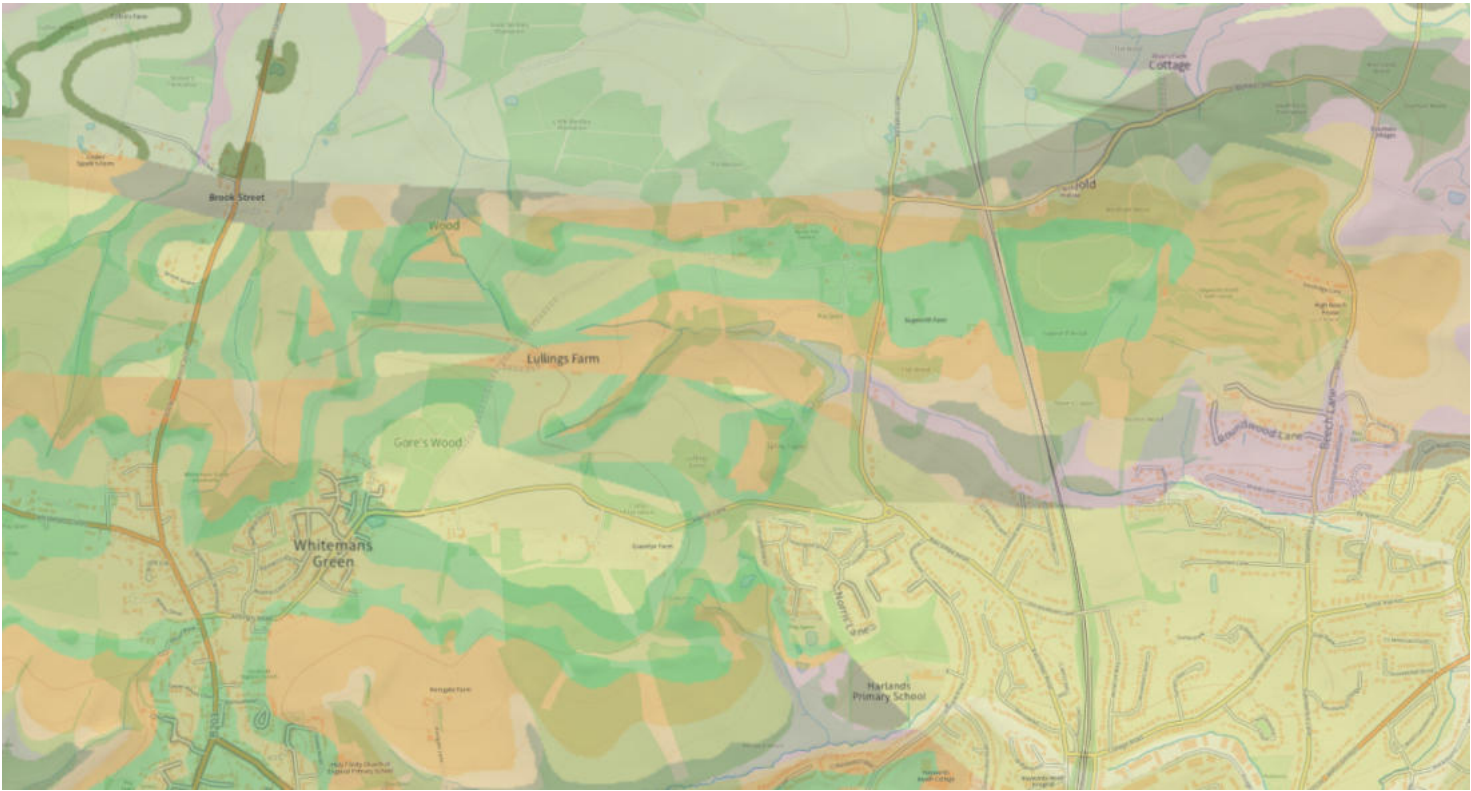
Site and Surroundings



Historic England map of designated heritage assets, including the Borde Hill RPG (marked green)



Topographic map



Local geology of mixed sandstones and mudstones

Site Photographs



South Front of Borde Hill Place



View across South Park from terrace to the south of Borde Hill Place



View from north side of Robertsmere Lake towards Eco Lodge site



East side of Dinosaur Wood, looking north

Site Photographs



Path through Dlnosaur Wood



North-west side of Dinosaur Wood, looking south-east



North side of South Lodge



From north of South Lodge garden, looking west

Landscape Character Assessment

Borde Hill exemplifies the fundamental landscape character of the High Weald National Landscape, characterised by its gentle topography, and rich tapestry of open grazed land and mature woodland. The High Weald is showcased by verdant woodlands, lowland heath, pastoral mixed farmland and wildflower meadows.

It is a quintessentially English landscape; a human-scale patchwork, etched with medieval field patterns and crowned by church spires, conveying a deep sense of historic significance. It serves as an essential backdrop to the Registered Park and Garden.

The wider landscape of the Weald is characterised by a great extent of ancient woods, gills, and shaws in smallholdings, the value of which is inextricably linked to long-term management. It encompasses a pattern of historic deer parks and later 18th century Estates, of which Borde Hill is one.

South Park lies within Landscape Character Area HW4 (High Weald Fringes) of the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment. This is a landscape of largely medieval origin with a persistence of ancient woodland, ancient routeways, historic country houses, farmsteads and parkscapes. The area is rich in natural history and includes a particular abundance of species-rich gill and semi-natural woodlands.

Within the High Weald Fringes Character Area, the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (2007) classifies the Registered Park and Garden as ‘47 Borde Hill Parkland’ and an area of post-medieval gentrification, comprising parkland on undulating land, generally sloping north-east with blocks of woodland.

The High Weald Fringes are noted to have a high level of perceived naturalness, including rural, tranquil qualities, and the intimate and unobtrusive settlement pattern across much of the area.

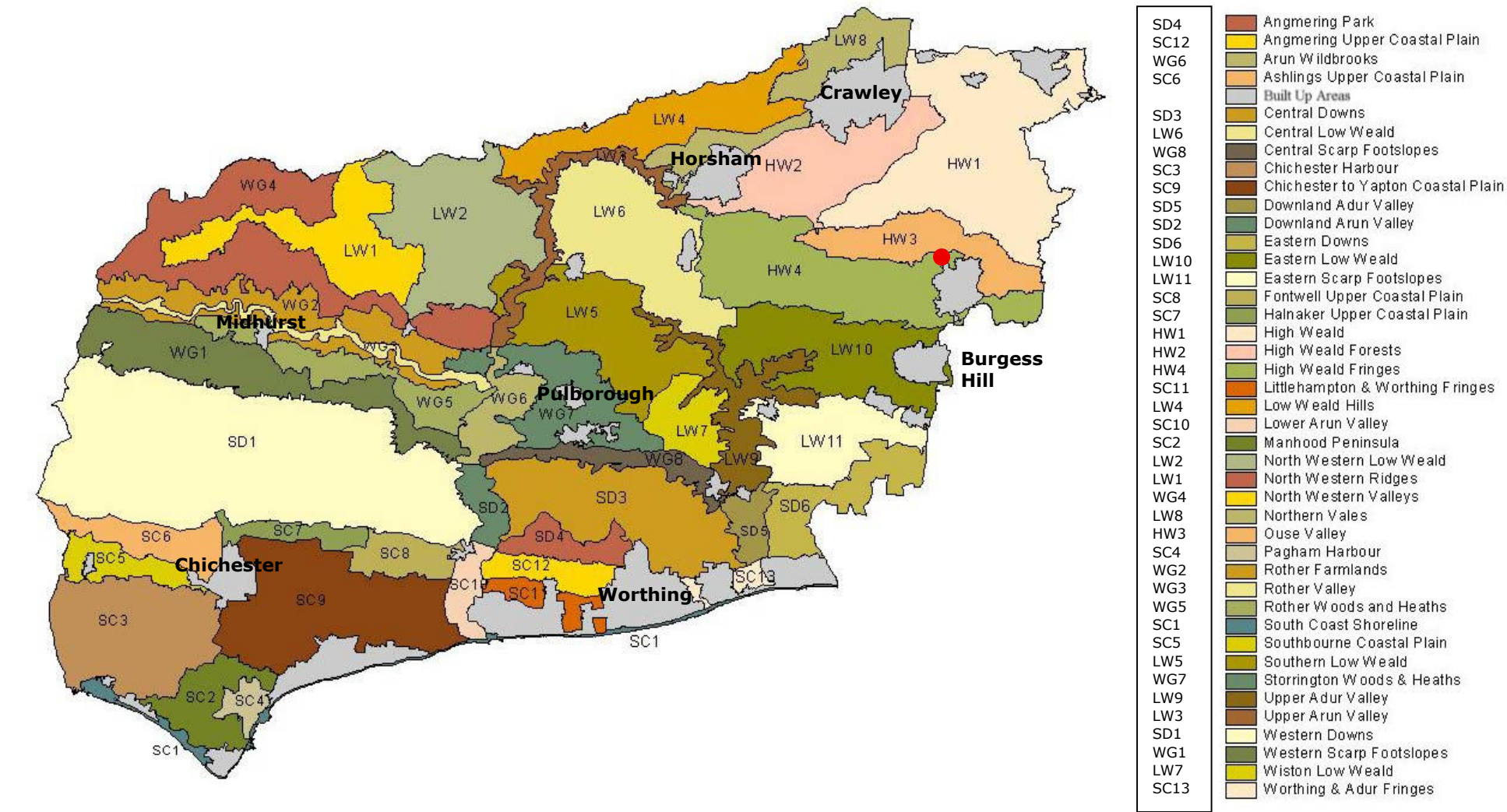
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL SENSITIVITIES

- The High Weald has a strong sense of remoteness and intimacy, largely due to the extent of woodland cover, which limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity.
- Borde Hill reflects a wider legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes within the Fringes LCA that are particularly sensitive to change and a loss of cultural identity through neglect and inactive management.
- There are important pockets of rich biodiversity that are particularly vulnerable to loss and change. This necessitates a joined up approach to landscape and estate management, which is strongly advocated for within the LCA.

RISKS FROM CHANGE

- The High Weald Fringes are at risk of erosion of woodland cover, where pockets of rich biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change. There has also been a decline in traditional woodland management techniques within this LCA, such as coppicing. This risks the integrity of the area’s wider woodland pattern, forcing significant, albeit fragmented interventions, such as clearance and new tree planting.

- Continuing amalgamation of small fields with orchard, hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees also risks eroding the rural character of the area. There are longer-term issues relating to increased traffic levels on small rural lanes, with consequent demands for road improvements.
- Uncontrolled access to the Parkland poses a risk of harm to landscape features, including erosion, soil compaction, and increased surface runoff. To address these issues, it is essential to implement careful management strategies, such as clearly signposted routes and during adverse conditions (typically over winter months) adherence to a comprehensive landscape management plan. This approach ensures an understanding of the potential effects of increased or more frequent visitor numbers on the estate.



Map of Areas within the Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (South Park marked in red)

Heritage Statement: Assessment of Significance

Borde Hill is a Grade II* RPG. Listed buildings and registered landscapes are graded I (exceptional interest – around 9% of registered sites), II* (particularly important, of more than special interest – around 28% of registered sites) or II (of special interest – around 63% of registered sites). In Sussex 50% of registered sites are listed as Grade I or Grade II* which is an exceptionally high proportion when compared to the rest of the country.

The only designated historic building within the application site area is the Grade II listed South Lodge, including gate piers and wall.

There are also a number of designated and undesignated heritage assets outside the application site, principal among these is the Grade II listed Borde Hill Place to the immediate north.

Other listed buildings of the Borde Hill Estate within the proximity of the application site include Ivy Cottage on the lane to the east of the main House and Sugworth Farmhouse to the east of the new entrance.

There are also various service and Estate buildings associated with Borde Hill Place which qualify as being curtilage listed. To the southwest of the main House is West Garden Lodge, which appears to be a farmhouse of early nineteenth century date.

The Victorian greenhouses are to the east of Borde Hill Place and comprise a complex of brick and metal-framed greenhouses. To the east of the greenhouses are Jack Vass Cottages, which were converted from an earlier building that appears to have been built between 1845 and 1875.

A stable block and walled garden was constructed in 1906 next to Borde Hill Lane, to the south of North Lodge.



Borde Hill Place



South Lodge

Heritage Statement: Assessment of Significance

LISTING DESCRIPTIONS

The official listing for the Borde Hill Park and Garden has been amended in places to clarify the present day names for certain areas of the RPG and to refer to planned works in the past tense.

Official list entry: BORDE HILL

Heritage Category: Park and Garden

Grade: II*

List Entry Number: 1000274

Date first listed: 31-May-1984

DETAILS A late C19 to mid C20 plantsman’s and collector’s Garden, laid out by Col. Stephenson Clarke, set within early C20 park with mid C19 origins.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT The first record of the Borde family at Borde Hill is of Stephen Borde in 1534. On his death in 1567 the estate passed to his son George, then to his grandson Stephen, who built the present house in 1598. The House and Estate remained in the Borde family until the death of William in 1720 after which it passed through many hands including, in 1743, those of the Gatlands who owned nearby Nymans (qv) in the C17. During the mid C19 the Estate was divided and the north and south halves let to two tenants by the owner, Frederick Wakes. In 1892, the whole estate was bought from a Mrs Cunliffe Lister by Col. Stephenson Clarke who largely laid out the present Garden and Parkland and planted the woodlands with ornamental trees. In 1948 he was succeeded by his son, Col. Ralph Stephenson Clarke, who restored the Garden and Parkland following wartime neglect and in 1965 established a company registered as a charity to manage the Garden, which from 1970 was run by his son, Robert N Stephenson Clarke. Through the company, the Garden is now (1998) managed by Mr and Mrs A P Stephenson Clarke while the majority of the surrounding Estate woodland and Parkland is in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Borde Hill is situated to the immediate north-west of Haywards Heath, on the west side of a minor road (Borde Hill Lane) leading northwards to Balcombe village. The c 155ha registered site, comprising c 9ha of ornamental gardens set within wooded parkland, occupies a central, east to west ridge which falls away northwards to undulating ground and southwards to an east to west stream valley, the south side of which rises to a further crest on the southern boundary. The site is bounded along the east and south sides by minor roads and enclosed partly by a dense mixed tree belt (along the southern half of the east boundary) and by intermittent trees (along Hanlye Lane to the south). To the north and east, the site’s parkland and woodland merge into the adjacent undulating, wooded farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Borde Hill is approached from Borde Hill Lane on the east side, a drive entering between stone gate piers on the south side of East Lodge [now known as North Lodge] (the site shown occupied by a lodge in 1874), running westwards for 70m then swinging north through the Gardens and west to the grassed turning circle on the north, entrance front of the House. From spring

1998, it was intended to close this entrance to all traffic and to open a new entrance off Borde Hill Lane some 260m further south, which would have linked with the present drive to the house by a drive running due north from the new entrance, along the west side of the walled garden. This drive serves a public car park and new plant centre (opened in spring 1998) built on land to the west of the walled garden. A secondary drive to the House from the south-west, shown on a sale plan of 1870 as lined with avenue trees (gone by 1909), runs through Lullings Farm past a lodge (50m north-east of the farm) erected between 1909 and 1937. In the extreme south-east corner of the site, entrance gates with stone piers beside the two-storey, sandstone and tile-hung South Lodge (first recorded on the OS map of 1937, listed grade II) lead to a track running north-westwards across the park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Borde Hill Place (listed grade II) stands on the crest of the ridge, towards the centre of the Park and commands extensive views north and south over the Park and also, northwards, to the more distant surrounding landscape and the Ouse Valley railway viaduct (some 200m beyond the northern site boundary). The two-storey, sandstone ashlar House, with three gables topped by finials, stone-mullioned windows and a tiled roof, was built between 1583 and 1590 by Stephen Borde, the present west front surviving from this period. It was enlarged shortly before sale in 1870 and considerably extended further, at the east end, at the beginning of the C20.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The ornamental Gardens surround the House but are most extensive to the west, south and east. The south front opens onto a paved apron enclosed by low curved walls, beyond which an open lawn, levelled in 1895, extends 90m south to an east to west path running along the top of a sandstone ha-ha which separates the Garden from the Park. Immediately east of the House and laid out on the site of a late C19 kitchen garden area, is a range of greenhouses [under restoration previously, which has now been complete] and a Mediterranean garden laid out at the same time. South of the greenhouses and a trellis-work screen is the Rose Garden, laid out in the 1990s in a series of geometric, lawn-edged beds on either side of a north-west to south-east axial brick path and featuring a central bed, [which was due] to be replaced with a fountain later [that] year (1998). On the south side of the Rose Garden is the Herbaceous and Shady Garden, laid out in the mid 1990s on a former nursery area (guidebook c 1970s) with long borders set in lawn and, facing into the Garden from the south side in a tile-roofed shelter, a statue entitled the Veiled Lady (also known as the Bride) by Antonio Tantardini [which is now within the main House]. East of these Gardens the main path leads into the Old Rhododendron Garden, planted largely with Himalayan hybrids, and to Jack Vass Walk, a grassy glade flanked by further rhododendron plantings and designed by Vass while head gardener in 1971-2. Eastwards, between the main drive to the House and the site boundary, is the Azalea Ring, laid out by 1902 as a west-facing horseshoe of island beds of azaleas and other trees and shrubs around lawn.

West and south-west of the House, on land shown enclosed as Garden by 1874, the west side of the South Lawn is contained by rising ground planted at the north end as a rock bank with low-growing shrubs and at the south end with newly laid out azalea beds backed by timber-edged, terraced shrubberies. From the south-west corner of the lawn the Long Walk, enclosed by sandstone walling, leads westwards

to give access up steps on its northern side to the rectangular Bride’s Pool [now known as the Italian Garden], laid out with a stone-paved surround and mixed planting in 1982 on the site of a former tennis court. This area is [was] being redesigned as an Italian garden to open in spring 1998. West of the Bride’s Pool is the Round Dell, containing a central informal pool, its surrounding slopes planted with trees and shrubbery threaded by winding rockwork paths and steps. The Long Walk [now known as Paradise Walk] terminates at the Old Potting Sheds, the roofless walls of which are planted with climbers and which enclose a herb garden. A path leads north-eastwards to the Long Dell, a former quarry planted with Sino-Himalayan species, to the east of which is the West Garden Lodge, a former estate office. On the south side of the Lodge, the raised paved and planted West Terraces (which overlook the Bride’s Pool) were formerly occupied by the Veiled Lady statue. North and east of the Lodge are further plantings of mature oak with an understorey of exotic trees and shrubs, from which steps lead down a steep bank on the north side of the House into the North Garden or Garden of Allah, planted from 1925 (LUC 1992) around a central lawn with shrubbery and ornamental trees including pine, birch and sorbus. The current guidebook to Borde Hill provides a full and detailed description of the plantings in the garden.

PARK The Park, presently extending west of the Garden and some 0.7km to both their north and south, was developed by Col. Stephenson Clarke between the late 1890s and the mid C20, from an existing c 20ha park (immediately surrounding the house) which had been laid out on former agricultural land between 1845 and 1874 (Tithe and OS 1st edition map). The North Park, laid to grass and permanent pasture, is extensively planted with clumps and individual trees including many exotics and varieties of oak, the present pattern established by 1909. A pinetum, also established by 1909 and replanted following storm damage in 1987, encloses the northern boundary of the park while more immediately to the north-west of the House, Warren Wood and Little Bentley Wood (shown as woodlands by 1874) contain exotics, including conifers and rhododendrons, the planting dating from 1905 and 1910 respectively. Some 300m east of Warren Wood is Naldred Farmhouse, a C17 or earlier timber-framed building (listed grade II).

West of the Garden and on the slopes to the south towards Lullings Ghyll, the parkland is more open in character, a number of trees on the south slopes having been lost in the 1987 storm. The eastern end of Lullings Ghyll now contains a chain of two ponds and an informal 1.5ha lake, laid out in the early 1990s. The South Park, extending as pastureland up the rising valley side from Lullings Ghyll to the southern site boundary, is also less extensively planted with parkland trees than the North Park. It contains several small woods or copses including Lullings Gorse, planted in 1934 and ([as of]1998) in poor condition, Spring Copse and Stone-pit Wood (adjacent to South Lodge) with mixed exotics and the Cedar Plantation on the southern boundary ([as of]1998, with three remaining cedars).

KITCHEN GARDEN [now known as the Walled Garden]

The [Walled Garden] lies [south] of the [former] main entrance at [North] Lodge, on the south side of the restaurant and conference centre which was converted from former stables in c 1987. The southward-sloping, 65m x 52m rectangular garden, built in 1906, is enclosed by high sandstone walls planted with climbers and wall shrubs and is entered by gates on the west side. The garden is laid to lawn

Heritage Statement: Assessment of Significance

quartered by brick paths with a tunnel arbour covering lengths of the north to south path and with a lily pool in the south-west quarter.

List Entry Name: SOUTH LODGE TO BORDE HILL INCLUDING GATE PIERS AND WALL

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1025508

Date first listed: 11-Dec-1987

Statutory Address 1: SOUTH LODGE TO BORDE HILL INCLUDING GATE PIERS AND WALL, HANLYE LANE

Lodge. c1890 [although now shown as being built post 1909 in historic maps] Sandstone ground floor, fishscale tile hung 1st floor and Horsham stone slab roof, hipped at left end with clustered brick chimney stack. 2 storeys, irregular fenestration. 1st floor has left side 3 light casement with diamond leaded lights. Ground floor has left hand 3 light smaller casement in stone moulded surround and 5 light bay with Horsham stone slab roof. Right side elevation has 5 light mullioned and transomed wooden oriel. Attached are a pair of square sandstone piers with ball finials and a section of walling, stepped to right of lodge and straight to left.

List Entry Name: BORDE HILL PLACE

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1025728

Date first listed: 28-Oct-1957

Statutory Address: BORDE HILL PLACE, BORDEHILL LANE

Large house of which the west front was built by Stephen [Borde] in 1598. Two storeys. Three windows. Ashlar. Three gables with finials. Tiled roof. Casement windows with stone mullions. Gabled porch with the date 1598 and the initials S. B. The return front of the old portion, facing north, has 3 windows. The interior has C16 panelling, fireplaces, staircase and an ornamental plaster ceiling. Large additions of 1900 circa at the east end.

List Entry Name: SUGWORTH FARMHOUSE

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1193589

Date first listed: 10-May-1983

Statutory Address: SUGWORTH FARMHOUSE, BORDEHILL LANE

C17 or earlier timber-framed building with modern red brick infilling, the front largely refaced with brick. Half-hipped roof of Horsham slabs. Casement windows. Two storeys. Two windows.



Full extent of South Park within the Borde Hill RPG, with Borde Hill Place within the foreground

Heritage Statement: Assessment of Significance

A fuller assessment of the historic significance of the Borde Hill RPG and its associated listed building is provided within the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) that supported original application DM/24/0433 and should be referred to for further details.

The proposed design revisions relate only to the development approved within South Park; therefore, a summary of the relevant findings from the HIA is provided below for ease of reference.

The significance of the part of South Park within the application site derives from the emparkment, landscape design and planting under the patronage of Col. Stephenson Clarke.

As has been shown through reference to historic maps, this area of land was of agricultural character and appearance prior to his tenure and was not part of the late nineteenth century Parkland associated with the aggrandised country house of Borde Hill Place.

The transformation of the land into Parkland and the planting of trees was motivated by a specific design intent and, given the relatively recent date of the park and level of significance, it is assumed that planting plans may have been preserved. The trees are highly significant both as part of a designed landscape and for their botanical heritage as part of a collection of national importance.

As is stated in its list entry, the primary significance of Borde Hill is “A late C19 to mid C20 plantsman’s and collector’s garden, laid out by Col. Stephenson Clarke, set within early C20 park with mid C19 origins.” South Park is an intrinsic part of this and contains a large number of trees planted during this most significant period of its history.

South Park has high significance as a heritage asset in its own right as well as in forming the designed landscape of Borde Hill Place. That the House is grade II listed and the park and Garden grade II* illustrates the weighting of their relative significance. South Park is of special interest in forming part of the setting of

Significance Assessment Borde Hill Place and development proposals must be assessed for how they impact the House through location and siting, form and appearance, wider effects and permanence.

Of greater importance, however, are considerations of the impacts of development on the Grade II* registered park and garden as a historic asset of more than special interest in its own right, regardless of the presence of the House or other built assets.

The aspects of the landscape that are of most importance to the interest of Borde Hill are its botanical heritage, its landscape and architectural history; and its landscape character

I. BOTANICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Any appraisal of the significance of Borde Hill must begin with a description of the botanical heritage of the Estate. This is particularly important to put the collection in its national context to understand the almost legendary role that Borde Hill has played and continues to play in safeguarding the nation’s botanical heritage.

The plant collection at Borde Hill was created by Col. Stephenson Robert Clarke, whom Sir Harold Hillier once described as ‘...the greatest amateur all- rounder in the gardening world this century’ (Clarke 1935).

The Victorian passion for collecting plants was fuelled by the many new species arriving in Britain, particularly from China, through the nursery firm of Veitch. Plant collecting became one of the most fashionable pursuits of the period and landowners competed to obtain the most impressive collection. To this end Col. Stephenson Clarke sponsored or joined syndicates sponsoring many plant expeditions by collectors including Kingdon Ward, Comber, Forrest, Farrer and ‘Chinese’ Wilson. Consequently, Borde Hill was the original destination of many plant introductions to the British Isles and many of the surviving plants represent either the original or the oldest surviving examples of these species in the British Isles.

Frequently the plants have collectors’ numbers providing a detailed record connecting the collector and the provenance of the plant. Therefore Borde Hill is of national scientific value and is used as a reference for much published material through the 20th century and has been frequently written about over the last 100 years. Furthermore, much systematic recording and evaluation has been undertaken and the information is contained in a number of reference books. This highlights the ongoing importance of the collection to horticulturalists, botanists, landscape connoisseurs and members of the visiting public.

“The Borde Hill Estate contains more Champion Trees – the tallest or largest of their kind recorded in the British Isles – than any other privately-owned collection in the country. Many of these species are exceedingly rare, both in cultivation and in their natural habitats. Others are examples of common trees, which have thrived in the Parkland conditions at Borde Hill. The collection is of great horticultural and conservation importance, and also constitutes one of the finest historical garden landscapes in the country.” Dr Owen Johnson, *The Tree Register of the British Isles*, 1999.

Lullings Ghyll and Spring Copse are designated as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodlands. These ancient woodlands add to the time depth of the heritage asset, which extends beyond the nineteenth and twentieth century parkland interventions.

The larger woodland blocks are characterised by mature native tree species, particularly pendulate oak, birch, hornbeam, ash, hazel, holly and elder, interspersed with exotic species including dense rhododendron.

Mature and ancient trees in the Parkland, including holm oak, hornbeam and conifers, are important both in cultural and ecological terms. Landscape and Architecture

2. LANDSCAPE AND ARCHITECTURE

The prime aspect of historic landscape at Borde Hill is the landscape established by Col. Stephenson Clarke in the early 20th century through the integration of the botanical collection into and around the earlier garden framework established in the mid 19th century.

Because Borde Hill evolved as a ‘collector’s’, rather than a ‘designer’s’, garden there is a general absence of formalised design throughout much of the garden and Col. Stephenson Clarke set plants in the locations best suited to the preferred microclimate of the particular plant. As Alan Mitchell wrote in 1989: “In a sense, the plan was to have no fixed plan at all, beyond finding the best site available for every species.”

The resulting landscape is unique. A series of woodland collections, effectively arboreta (each over 10 acres in size), were created, containing both exotics and natives, including trees of considerable rarity. The arboreta comprise: Warren Wood, Little Bentley Wood (including Stephanie’s Glade and Little Bentley Plantation), the Pinetum, Peartree Wood, Lullings Ghyll, Stonepit Wood (also known as Spring Copse or Dinosaur Wood), the Gorse, Gores Wood, South Roadside Plantation, North Roadside Plantation, and The Tolls. These are set within the undulating and extensive Wealden Parkland containing exotics planted as individual specimens that would never have been planted as parkland specimens before or after. As a period piece of botanical landscaping, this is considered to be perhaps the most extensive carried out by a private individual in England at that time and is one of the earliest examples of exotics being planted within native woodlands.

Borde Hill also contains a number of buildings of architectural and historic significance. The only designated historic building within the application site area is the Grade II listed South Lodge, including gate piers and wall, which is at the southeast corner of the RPG. This was built after 1910 in a vernacular revival style and has a sandstone ground floor, fishscale tile hung first floor and Horsham stone slab roof.

The west front of the Grade II Listed Borde Hill Place dates from 1598 but the earlier house was encased and extended in an attractive, matching Elizabethan/Jacobean style in 1870. It commands ridge-top location with views across both North and South Park from where it and its gabled roof and chimneys are often visible.

The House and its Parkland are inextricably linked and the one contributes to the significance of the other. Although sited to exploit views across the Weald there is no formal designed axial arrangement or vista linking the House to the surrounding landscape.

3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

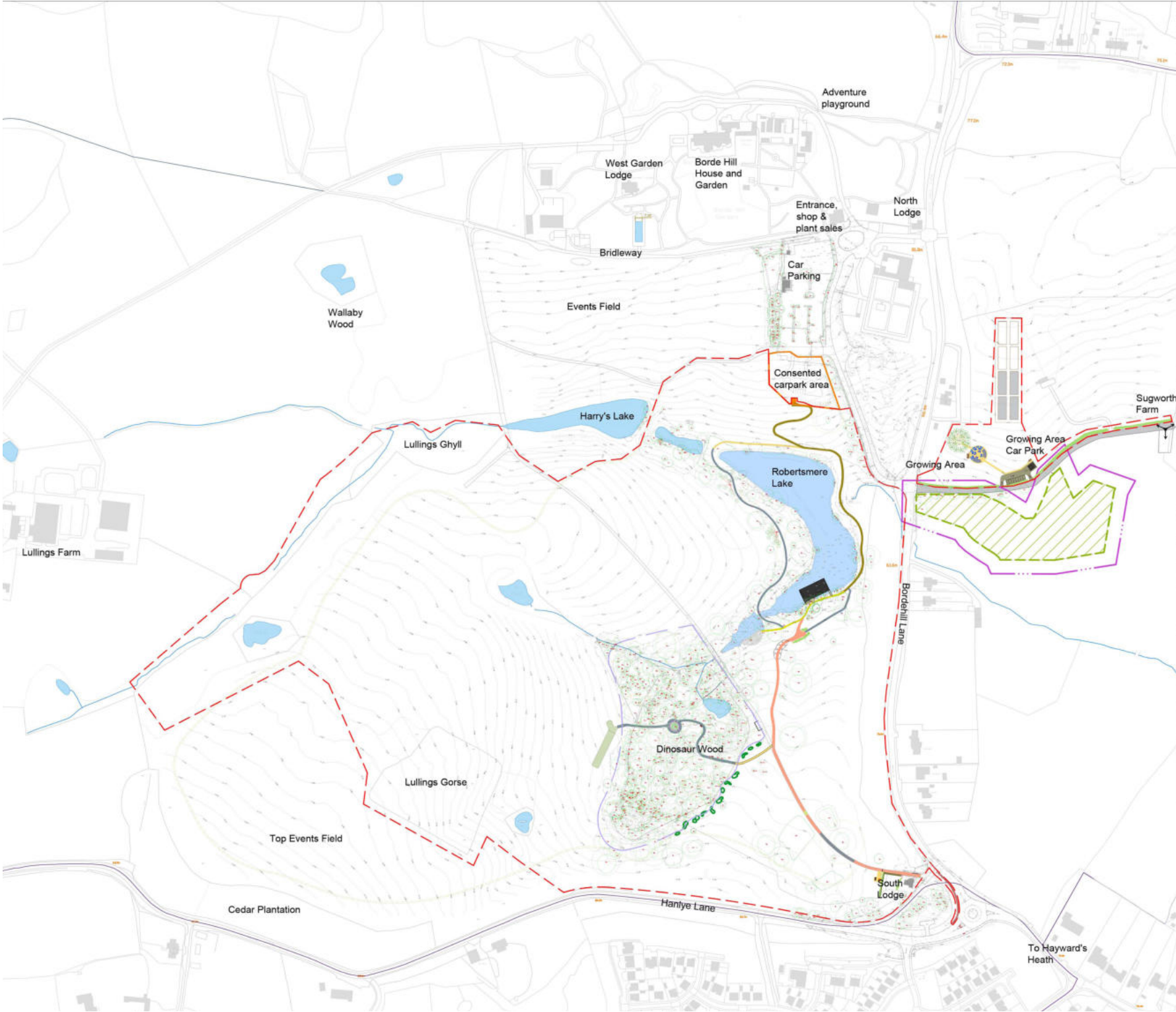
Borde Hill has been created in a typical Wealden landscape of rolling ridges and wooded ghyll valleys. The Sussex High Weald landscape of sheltered, well-watered valleys, combined with acidic soils, has produced many fine gardens, including Nymans, Wakehurst, Leonardslee, South Lodge and High Beeches, creating a characteristic pattern of exotics naturalized in the Wealden landscape. Much of the Estate, with the exception of Sugworth, Penland and Hanlye Farms and Wickham Wood, lies within the High Weald National Landscape.

The historic environment is fundamental to the distinctive character, sense of place and natural beauty of National Landscapes. This gives an additional dimension to the significance of Borde Hill within the landscape character of the High Weald.

Relevant Planning History

This section describes the relevant planning history associated with the application site:

- **DM/24/0433:** Visitor and community hub, outdoor learning and adventure playground, community growing area and historic botanical propagation polytunnels, new and improved access and connectivity infrastructure, wider landscaping and biodiversity enhancements and associated works. Approved 6th December 2024.
- **DM/18/0741:** The removal of existing playground and the laying out of an overflow car park and the installation of a new adventure playground at site 2. Approved 17th April 2018.
- **13/01404/FUL:** To construct a 6mx8m timber shelter in the playground at Borde Hill Garden. Approved 7th October 2013.
- **09/03801/FUL:** Replacement adventure play area. Approved 5th March 2010.
- **00/02580/COU:** Close existing children’s playground and remove all apparatus from site. Create playground in parkland 250m due west to be accessed via new footway from car park area. Approved 7th February 2001.
- **CD/051/96:** Children’s playground adjacent to Borde Hill Garden car park. Approved 15th November 1996.



Scheme as approved under permission DM/24/0433

Relevant Planning History

PERMISSION DM/24/0433

The original planning permission (DM/24/0433) which this s73 application seeks to vary, granted consent for the following works:

- Community and visitor hub building (the ‘Eco Lodge’) located at the southern edge of Roberstmere Lake.
- Access and connectivity improvements across the South Park; leading from the South Lodge to the Eco Lodge, around Robertsmere Lake, through Dinosaur Wood and a serpentine pathway from the extended northern carpark (as consented under extant permission DM/18/0741). The approved surfacing finish was specified as either Golpa or Coxwell gravel.
- Outdoor learning and adverture playground adjacent to the western boundary of Dinosaur Wood, re-sited from its originally proposed location within the ancient woodland
- Community growing and plant propogation area at Sugworth Farm
- Landscape and biodiversity improvements across South Park

Planning condition 18 of permission DM/24/0433 restricted the opening hours of the site, with the stated reason of safeguarding the neighbouring amenity of nearby residents. The condition was worded as follows:

*The buildings and land subject of this planning application shall not be used except during the following hours of **9am to 5pm from 1st March - 31st October and 9am - 3pm from 1st November until the final day of February** every year seven days per week.*



Approved Eco Lodge (North Elevation)

Proposed Revisions

This s73 application seeks, in part, to make design amendments to elements of the approved scheme as secured by **condition 2** of permission DM/24/0433. The proposed design revisions relate solely to the approved development within the South Park and do not include design amendments to the scheme consented at Sugworth Farm.

The principal design revisions relate to the re-location and extension of the approved learning and adventure play area, informed by a more detailed site-selection process following the removal of the play area from Dinosaur Wood during the original application. It would be re-positioned on the north-western side of the ancient woodland and will be expanded to include a central dinosaur play structure, basket swings, play areas that interact with the Ghyll habitat in this location and a canopied learning shelter, approximately 65 metres to the east of the main play area. Extensive soft landscaping is also proposed, including a new tree belt extending from the ancient woodland, which will wrap around and through the re-located play area

The expanded play area will build on the prehistoric associations of the ancient woodland, where iguanodon bones were once discovered. It will also enhance the local community's connection with the natural setting through integration with the Ghyll habitat, the proposed tree shaw and by incorporating an outside learning shelter to immerse educational groups in nature and a rural context.

Revisions are also proposed to the approved path network. The pathway will take the same route from the South Lodge, before diverting more directly east as it approaches the Eco Lodge. A new serpentine path from the north, incorporating stepped access, will provide a re-configured access from the middle of the northern car park (between the existing car park and its consented extension). This route will connect to a re-aligned path around Robertsmere Lake and branch off to provide more direct connectivity with the re-located play area. Fittleworth gravel will be used for the surfacing material, as opposed to the previously consent Golpa and Coxwell gravel finish.

Minor design changes are also proposed to the Eco Lodge, including a revised internal layout, reduction in decking and the addition of a rooflight to the northern canopy. There are also revisions to the landscaping and biodiversity improvements within South Park, whilst the scope of associated works will also change, such as the installation of an air source heat pump to serve the Eco Lodge.

Planning condition 9 of the original permission refers to a drawing number and play equipment that will be superseded by the new play area sought under this s73 application. As such, revisions to the wording of this condition is also sought to capture the updated drawing number and proposed play structures.

A Botanical Walkover (Arbtech), revised Biodiversity Net Gain File Note and Metric (Arbtech), and an updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Arbtrack Systems) is submitted in support of this s73 application assessing the differing impacts the revised designs will have on existing habitats and trees. These updated reports will necessitate corresponding revisions to the documents secured under **condition 12** (arboricultural reports) and **condition 13** (ecology reports) of the original permission.



Proposed site plan

Proposed Revisions

It is also proposed to amend the wording of pre-commencement and pre-occupation conditions to enable the partial discharge of those conditions as they relate specifically to South Park and Sugworth Farm.

Condition 3 (CEMP) is a pre-commencement condition that currently applies to the entire site. It is worded as follows:

No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

It is proposed that this condition be revised to read as follows (amendment emboldened):

*No development shall take place **within either South Park or Sugworth Farm** until a Construction Management Plan **for the relevant part of the site** has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

This proposed wording is likewise proposed for **condition 4** (Air Quality Assessment), **condition 5** (foul and surface water drainage details), condition 8 (landscaping details) and **condition 14** (Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy).

Condition 6 (site protection plan), **condition 7** (materials schedule) and **condition 11** (cycle parking spaces) relate only to the development approved within South Park. It is therefore proposed that they be amended so that impose pre-commencement requirements to the South Park only, as follows:

*6. No works in connection with the development hereby approved **within the South Park** shall commence unless a site protection plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Site protection measures in respect of the watercourse and lake as well as adjacent trees shall be shown on a layout plan accompanied by descriptive text and shall include:*

- a) The location of the features to be retained and protected during construction works; and*
- b) The position and details of warning signs and protective fencing to be erected.*

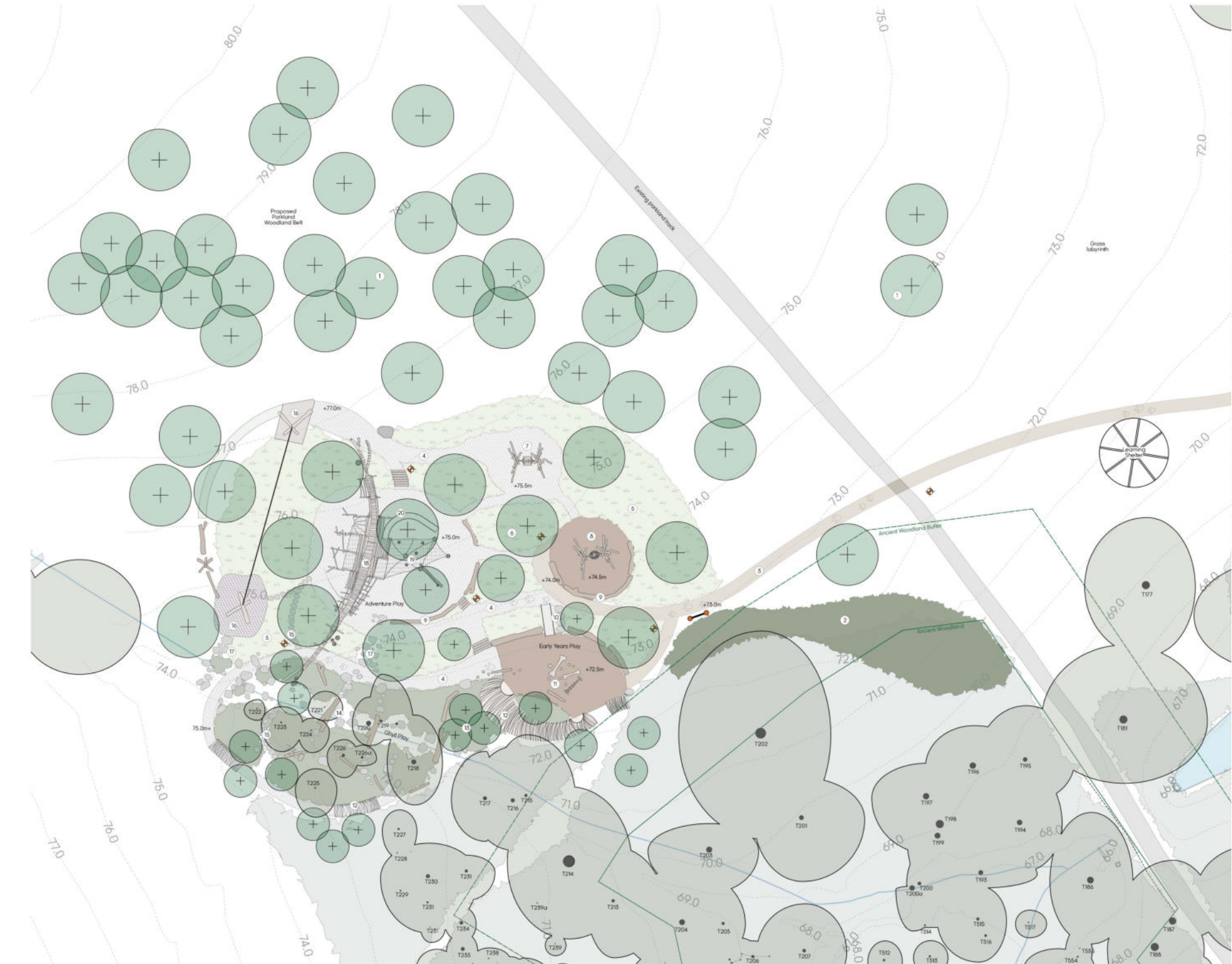
*7. No development **within the South Park** shall be carried out unless and until a schedule of materials and finishes to be used for external walls / roofs / fenestration of all the proposed buildings including any associated decking areas have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

*11. No part of the development **within the South Park** shall be first occupied until covered and secure cycle parking spaces have been provided in accordance with plans and details submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

The requirement for covered storage is also proposed for removal from Condition 11.

The s73 planning application also seeks to vary the opening hours at **condition 18** of the original permission, proposing to change the condition wording as follows (revision emboldened):

*The buildings and land subject of this planning application shall not be used except during the following hours of **7am to 8pm year round**, seven days per week.*



Proposed play and learning area

Proposed Revisions Summary

In summary, the proposed revisions are as follows:

Planning Condition	Original Scope	Proposed Revision
2 - Approved Plans	Secures approved drawings for the original scheme	Updated to reflect revised drawings numbers
3 - CEMP	Pre-commencement condition applied to the entire application site	Revise wording so that the condition can be discharged separately for South Park and Sugworth Farm
4 - Air Quality Assessment	Pre-commencement condition applied to the entire application site	Revise wording so that the condition can be discharged separately for South Park and Sugworth Farm
5 - Foul and Surface Water Drainage	Pre-commencement condition applied to the entire application site	Revise wording so that the condition can be discharged separately for South Park and Sugworth Farm
6 - Site Protection Plan	Pre-commencement condition applied to the entire application site	Revise wording so that the condition applies for works within the South Park only
7 - Materials Schedule	Pre-commencement condition applied to the entire application site	Revise wording so that the condition applies to buildings within the South Park only
8 - Landscaping Details	Pre-commencement condition applied to the entire application site	Revise wording so that the condition can be discharged separately for South Park and Sugworth Farm
9 - Play Equipment Details	Pre-relevant works condition applied to approved drawings for the original scheme	Updated to reflect revised drawing number and play equipment
11 - Cycle Parking Spaces	Pre-occupation condition applied to the entire application site	Revise wording so that the condition relates to the South Park and removes the requirement for covered storage
12 - Arboricultural Reports	Secures compliance with originally approved arboricultural report	Updated to reflect revised arboricultural report
13 - Ecology reports	Secures compliance with originally approved ecological report	Updated to reflect revised ecological material
14 - Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy	Pre-occupation condition applied to the entire application site	Revised wording so that the condition can be discharged separately for South Park and Sugworth Fa
18 - Opening Hours	Restrictions on opening hours	Amended to 7am-8pm year round, seven days per week

Planning Policy Framework

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Section 38(6) requires local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations (such as the National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF) indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan currently in force across the area relevant to the application site currently consists of the following adopted plans:

- Mid Sussex District Plan (2018)
- Ansty, Staplefield & Brook Neighbourhood Plan (2017)

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

A presumption in favour of sustainable development is found at the heart of the NPPF, for both plan-making and decision-taking, defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives): economic, social and environment.

For decision-taking this means approving applications that accord with up-to-date policies without delay; or where policies are absent, silent or out-of-date, granting permission unless the Framework provides clear reasons for refusing a proposal in a particular location or any adverse impacts of permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT PLAN (2018)

The following planning policies of the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) are relevant to the assessment of this application:

- Policy DP1: Sustainable Economic Development
- Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy
- Policy DP16: High Weald AONB
- Policy DP19: Sustainable Tourism
- Policy DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities
- Policy DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services
- Policy DP26: Character and Design
- Policy DP28: Accessibility
- Policy DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution;
- Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

- Policy DP36: Historic Parks and Gardens
- Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38: Biodiversity

DRAFT MID SUSSEX DISTRICT PLAN 2021-2039

The emerging Mid Sussex Local Plan was submitted for examination on the 8th July 2024 but, following the conclusion of Phase 1 hearings, the Planning Inspector leading the examination found that the LPA had failed to meet the Duty to Co-operate with regards to unmet housing need.

The Planning Inspector has indicated a willingness to consider this matter further before a formal decision is made on the emerging Local Plan. However, until the plan is formally adopted, its policies do not hold full statutory weight in the decision-making process.

ANSTY, STAPLEFIELD & BROOK STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (2017)

The following planning policies of the Ansty, Staplefield & Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan (ASBNP) are relevant to the assessment of this application:

- Policy AS3: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Policy AS8: Improvement of Community Facilities
- Policy AS14: Walking and Cycling Routes

OTHER RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS

The following supplementary planning documents (SPD) and guidance documents are relevant to the assessment of the planning application:

- Design Guide SPD (2020)
- High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024
- High Weald Colour Study (2017)

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

Mid Sussex
Design Guide
Supplementary Planning
Document SPD

Adopted

November 2020



Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD

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HERITAGE IMPACT

Local Plan Policy DP36 states that the character and appearance of registered park and gardens will be protected.

NPPF paragraph 212 states that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and that the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. **Paragraph 215** sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development.

The proposed design revisions have the potential to impact on the Grade II* Listed Borde Hill Park and Garden, and the setting of the Grade II Listed Borde Hill Place and South Lodge.

The principle of providing a play area within South Park was established under original permission DM/24/0433 where a zipline and basket swing were approved to the west of Dinosaur Wood.

A landscape view assessment has been incorporated into this statement to evaluate views of the re-located play area from Borde Hill Place, the public bridleway and from within the wider RPG, from positions where the landscape is more open. The viewpoint map presented opposite identifies six viewpoints, with the effect of the play area from these positions set out on the following page.

In summary, wider views of the play equipment will be largely screened by established tree cover and the sloping topography of the land, with views from Borde Hill Place completely obscured.

The wider parkland was designed, in part, to exploit long distance views from Borde Hill Place (albeit not on a formally designed axial arrangement) and the careful siting of the play area within the landscape ensures that the open parkland’s contribution to the setting of the Grade II Listed house is preserved. Once established, the proposed tree belt will further soften views of the play area from Borde Hill Place and from within the RPG.

The expanded learning and play offering will attract a larger number of families to the RPG, providing opportunities to understand the significance of the South Park, its botanical collection (including champion trees and WPC listed species) and experience its historically important landscape character. The dinosaur theme of the play draws upon the discovery of iguanodon remains within the ancient woodland, with the equipment conceived not only as play infrastructure but as a means to engage visitors with the site’s geological past.

The play area tree planting will also continue the informal, parkland approach characteristic of Col. Stephenson Clarke’s stewardship and reinforce the botanical collection of the RPG, enhancing features of the RPG that are central to its significance as a heritage asset.

The new pathway through South Park broadly follows the route approved under permission DM/24/0433 before continuing more directly eastwards, meaning its impact on the RPG would be similar to that approved under the original permission. The proposed use of Fittleworth stone is considered an improvement on the approved Golpa or Coxwell gravel finish, being more characteristic of building materials used locally (including the sandstone masonry of Borde Hill

Place) and offering a more natural and rustic finish typical of parkland settings. The minor alterations to this route would ensure that the impact on the setting of the Grade II Listed South Lodge is unchanged from the original permission.

The serpentine route to the north of Robertsmere Lake is retained, albeit in an extended and adjusted position to align with the northerly access point. Steps have also been incorporated into the design. This revised pathway allows visitors approaching from the north, including those with accessibility requirements, to navigate the gradient safely and take a more direct approach to the re-located play area.

The pathway would follow the downslope of the embankment, where it would be screened from views from both Borde Hill Place and the public bridleway, as can be appreciated in the viewpoint analysis on the following page. The setting of the Grade II Listed house would continue to be preserved and there would be no significantly different impact on the wider RPG when compared to the serpentine route previously approved.

The design revisions to the approved Eco Lodge are minor in nature and would have no consequential impact on the RPG and the setting of Borde Hill Place

Evidently, the most significant revision relates to the re-located learning and play area, where it has been demonstrated that its careful siting and design would not cause undue harm to the parkland character nor the setting of Borde Hill Place. In this way, the revised proposal should not alter the LPA’s previous heritage assessment of the proposals approved under DM/24/0433, with the scheme’s impact remaining at less than substantial harm (at the lower end of the scale).

Turning to the public benefits as directed by NPPF paragraph 215, the expanded play area would enhance opportunities for wider public access and community engagement, key aims that support the long-term appreciation and stewardship of the RPG. By providing a more appealing experience for families, schools and visitors, the proposal would draw more people to the park to understand and value its botanical, landscape, and historic significance. In doing so, this strengthens the RPG as a heritage landscape that continues to evolve and contribute to the local community.

Furthermore. the siting and design of the play area have been developed with education in mind. The play area has been inspired by the natural history of the landscape and is designed to encourage children to engage with and learn from interactions with the natural environment.

The updated BNG metric also shows that the proposals will deliver further biodiversity enhancements beyond those secured under the original permission (as set out in more detail within the *Biodiversity Net Gain* section of this statement) and represents an additional, significant public benefit that weighs in favour of the scheme. The degree of heritage impact continues to be clearly outweighed by the significant public benefits delivered by the proposals.

DESIGN AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Local Plan Policy DP16 states that small scale proposals that support the economy and social well-being of the National Landscape and ensure the conservation and



Views towards the re-located play area



View 1: The play area will be completely obscured when viewed from Borde Hill Place



View 2: The play structures would be obscured behind established tree cover and the brow of the slope within the middle field



View 3: Only the uppermost elements of the play structures, if any, would be visible above the brow of the middle field slope.



View 4: The play structures would only begin to come into view from vantage points within the middle field.



View 5: The play structures would be entirely concealed behind tree cover from the southern edge of Robertsmere Lake (approved Eco Lodge position)



View 6: The play area would be largely concealed by a the tree belt extending from Dinosaur Wood

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enhancement of natural beauty of the protected landscape will be supported.

The application site is within the High Weald Fringes LCA, where there is a risk of erosion of woodland cover and the rich biodiversity of the area. Uncontrolled access to the Parkland poses a risk of harm to landscape features, including through erosion and soil compaction.

The viewpoint assessment on the previous page demonstrates that the proposed play area would be largely screened from key vantage points within the landscape, including from the public bridleway traversing the northern part of South Park. The use of natural wooden play equipment will ensure the structures will assimilate with the wooded backdrop of Dinosaur Wood and, over time, with the newly planted tree belt as it matures. Overall, the development would be visually unobtrusive in wider views across this part of the High Weald National Landscape.

The new tree planting will strengthen the historic parkland character of the RPG and extend woodland cover in a National Landscape area at risk of tree loss. The tree planting has taken reference from the existing tree belt extending west from the ancient woodland, adding to the landscape composition in this area and enhancing the informal planting arrangement within the parkland. The new tree planting will also deliver enhanced biodiversity benefits, as reflected in the updated BNG metric, and will help address the risk of biodiversity loss identified within the High Weald Fringes LCA. Overall, the proposed landscaping has been shaped by the parkland character of the RPG, will further enhance biodiversity beyond that secured under the original permission, and will therefore make a positive contribution to the wildlife and natural beauty qualities of the High Weald National Landscape.

The realigned pathway network would have no materially greater impact on the landscape than that approved under permission DM/24/0433, for reasons set out within the *Heritage Impact* section of this *Planning Appraisal*. The proposed routes through South Park are designed to accommodate visitors of all accessibility needs, supporting the accessibility objectives set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan (page 67) and providing defined pathways that manage unfettered access across the South Park - which would in turn mitigate against soil erosion and compaction within the landscape.

For these reasons, the proposals are considered to conserve, enhance and further the objectives of the High Weald National Landscape, in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy DP16.

ECOLOGY, BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN AND TREES

The revised design proposals will lead to differing impacts on existing habitats and trees and updated technical reports have therefore been submitted assessing this impact. The updated reports necessitate corresponding revisions to the documents secured under condition 12 (arboricultural reports) and condition 13 (ecology reports).

A Botanical Walkover (Arbtech) primarily assesses the impact of the re-located play area on an area of Ghyll and concludes that the play intervention will unlikely cause any harm on the ecological condition of the habitat. No further flora or fauna

ecological surveys are considered necessary as the wider site remains relatively unchanged since the last ecological survey visit.

A revised Biodiversity Net Gain metric and File Note (Arbtech) has been prepared to assess the effects of the amended proposals on existing habitats and the contribution of the additional tree planting to overall biodiversity uplift. The updated metric identifies a 56.57% net gain in habitat units (an increase from 16.84% under the original permission), representing a substantial benefit that further offsets the previously identified heritage harm and enhances the qualities of the High Weald National Landscape.

An updated Tree Survey and Arboricultural Method Statement (Arbortrack Systems) identifies a positive outcome arising from the revised proposals, with several trees previously shown for removal under the original scheme now capable of being retained. All other existing trees can be retained, subject to specific construction materials and methodology recommendations, and as such the wooded qualities that contribute to the significance of the Borde Hill RPG will be preserved.

OPENING HOURS

Planning condition 18 of original permission DM/24/0433 restricted the opening hours of the site as follows:

The buildings and land subject of this planning application shall not be used except during the following hours of 9am to 5pm from 1st March - 31st October and 9am - 3pm from 1st November until the final day of February every year seven days per week.

The applicants have reviewed these restrictions and, in order to deliver the type of community benefits envisaged for the project, seek extended opening hours for the site. It is therefore proposed that condition 18 be revised so that the site is open to the public between 7am and 8pm year-round, seven days per week. This will allow for the types of activities anticipated at the Eco Lodge, such as nature-based sessions or early-morning/early-evening wellness activities like yoga, which typically fall outside the currently approved hours. The extended hours would also support before and after school activities, including by groups such as Scouts.

Greater flexibility in opening hours will evidently allow a broader range of community events to take place, helping to offset the loss of valued community space following the recent closure of Clair Hall in Haywards Heath.

The reason given for imposing the original restriction was to safeguard the amenities of nearby residents, in accordance with **Local Plan Policy DP26** which seeks, in part, to protect neighbouring privacy, outlook, daylight/sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution. It can be reasonably inferred that the opening hours condition relates more directly to potential impacts on privacy, noise and light pollution.

Activities occurring outside the current 9am to 3-5pm window will involve only light levels of comings and goings, typically limited to small, standalone sessions. These activities will take place in the centre of South Park at the Eco Lodge and play area, approximately 100 metres from the nearest dwellings to the east (Danesbury, Woodsdale, Hazelwick, Hill Cottage) and 320 metres from the Grade II

listed South Lodge.

The separation distance between the Eco Lodge and the eastern properties is reinforced by the public highway and established tree cover along the eastern boundary of the RPG, which would form effective buffers that mitigate any potential effects related to light spill, privacy or noise.

South Lodge is occupied by a staff member of Borde Hill and this will continue to be case in the future. As such, the occupier has a functional connection to the site’s activities and will be on call to oversee early morning and evening events. Given the limited comings and goings expected during these times, no harmful impacts on the amenity or privacy of South Lodge would be caused by passer-bys using the southern entrance into the RPG.

Overall, the modest scale of comings and goings during the extended hours, the significant distance to the nearest residential properties, and the buffering effect of intervening features will ensure that the revised opening hours would not harm neighbouring amenity, in accordance with Local Plan Policy DP26.

OTHER MATTERS

It is proposed to amend the wording of conditions 3 (CEMP), 4 (Air Quality Assessment), 5 (foul and surface water drainage), 8 (landscaping details) and 14 (Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy) so that their pre-commencement requirements are separated between the South Park and Sugworth Farm areas of the application site.

The Sugworth Farm proposals were central to securing the Heritage Lottery funding for the project and there is a desire for this part of the scheme to come forward first so that its benefits can be delivered as early as possible, with construction works planned to start in 2026. The proposed compartmentalisation of select pre-commencement and pre-occupation planning conditions would allow the partial discharge of the conditions as they relate to Sugworth Farm, allowing construction works to begin on this part of the application site first.

It is also proposed that conditions 6, 7 and 11 be reworded so that they apply only to South Park, for the following reasons:

- Condition 6 (Site Protection Plan): There are no features within Sugworth Farm that require protection, such as trees or waterbodies, and as such no site-specific safeguarding measures are necessary in this area.
- Condition 7 (Materials Schedule): This condition was imposed to ensure that the special character of the RPG and the High Weald National Landscape is protected and enhanced. As the approved polytunnels within Sugworth Farm lie outside both designations, it is reasonable for this condition to relate solely to the South Park, rather than capturing the polytunnels approved at Sugworth Farm.
- Condition 11 (Cycle Parking Details): Cycle parking is proposed only within South Park, as shown on the approved plans for the original permission. Sheffield stands were approved adjacent to South Lodge (with details

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to be secured by condition), and it is therefore also proposed that the requirement for ‘covered’ cycle storage be removed from the condition. This is considered reasonable as covered facilities are unnecessary given the short-term nature of visits to the park and the absence of any requirement for overnight storage, which could otherwise necessitate the need for covered provision.

CONCLUSION

The proposed design revisions represent a sensitive refinement of the scheme approved under permission DM/24/0433, maintaining its overall design intent and delivering clear landscape and ecological benefits through the proposed tree belt. The re-located learning and play area has been carefully sited, with the submitted viewpoint analysis demonstrating that it will remain visually unobtrusive, preserving the parkland character of the Borde Hill RPG, High Weald National Landscape and the setting of Borde Hill Place. The minor amendments to the pathway network and the Eco Lodge would result in no significantly greater impact than the approved scheme.

It is submitted that the revised proposals deliver enhanced public benefits, which further strengthen the overall planning balance in favour of the scheme and outweigh the previously identified low level of less than substantial heritage harm

Updated ecological and arboricultural assessments consider the differing impacts of the revised scheme on existing trees and habitats, with tree-related impacts notably reduced compared with the original proposals. The revised BNG metric demonstrates a substantial 56.57% net gain in habitat units, significantly in excess of the level secured under the original permission.

The proposed extension to opening hours will allow a broader range of community activities to take place and support the public engagement objectives at the heart of the project. The increased flexibility can be accommodated without harm to neighbouring amenity, owing to the separation distances, intervening tree buffers and public highway, and limited activity levels associated with the extended hours.

Finally, the proposed separation of conditions between the South Park and Sugworth Farm parts of the application site provide a practical and justified approach that would enable the early delivery of the Heritage Lottery funded works at Sugworth Farm in 2026, which will in turn enable the delivery of an accessible programme of activities designed to support the wellbeing of the local community.

It is therefore respectfully requested that this s73 planning application is approved so that the wide ranging benefits of the scheme can be delivered.



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