



Historic England

Mrs Joanne Fisher
Mid Sussex District Council
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Direct Dial: 0207 973 3627

Our ref: P01601998

18 December 2025

Dear Mrs Fisher

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**BORDE HILL GARDEN BORDE HILL LANE HAYWARDS HEATH WEST SUSSEX
RH16 1XP**

Application No. DM/25/3104

Introduction

Thank you for your letter of 5th December 2025 regarding variations to planning conditions relating to planning permission DM/24/0433. Historic England provided advice on planning application DM/24/0433 in our letters dated 25th March 2024 and 10th June 2024.

In those letters, we highlighted that we had concerns regarding the proposed scale of the Eco Lodge, the amount and scale of infrastructure associated with the proposals and the impact the proposed play and outdoor learning area would have on the Ancient Woodland and Champion Trees.

The application was amended to remove the play area from within the Ancient Woodland but proposed to retain a zip wire outside of the woodland. This proposal principally involves the relocation of the previously proposed adventure play area to the western edge of the Ancient Woodland along with additional tree planting.

We offer the following advice to assist your Authority in determining this application.

Summary

Borde Hill is an important Sussex garden (included on the Register of Parks and Gardens (RPGs) of Special Historic Interest in England at grade II*), which exhibits an



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outstanding collection of champion and veteran trees, exotic plants and shrubs set within a designed historic parkland.

We are supportive in principle of the aims of the project which includes engaging new audiences with Borde Hill and, in particular, those sections of society that do not have easy access to or do not normally visit outdoor space such as this.

However, as set out in our previous advice, we are concerned about the scale and amount of new infrastructure that is being proposed in South Park to deliver the aims of the project and the harm that this would cause to the naturalistic, wood pasture character and the key features that define historic parkland.

Placing the adventure playground in the proposed location would cause further cumulative harm to the significance of the RPG over and above the harm that would be caused by the consented scheme.

We recommend that an alternative, less harmful location is found for this facility such as in an area that has already been previously disturbed and used for play equipment in the past.

This would connect the proposals for South Park with that of the wider estate so that the new and diverse audiences (that the proposals are seeking to attract) would experience and appreciate more of the historic gardens and exotic plants at Borde Hill rather than just South Park.

We also recommend that going forward, a Conservation Management Plan is prepared for Borde Hill, so that proposals for the whole site are considered holistically in order to maintain the significance of the RPG and the setting of the house.

Historic England Advice

Significance

Borde Hill RPG is of significance as a 19th century to mid- 20th century plantsman's and collector's garden, set within early 20th century parkland with mid-19th century origins. Many of the specimens brought back by the plant hunters were placed in woodland and as ornamental landscape features in the surrounding parkland to provide views, interest and diversity.



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Borde Hill provides an early example of planting of exotics within native woodlands (arboreta), perhaps the most extensive undertaken by a private individual. The park and garden is registered at grade II* and therefore has a high level of special interest.

At its core is Borde Hill Place (grade II listed), an Elizabethan Manor House that was sensitively extended at the turn of the century. The house and formal gardens are located on a central east to west ridge which affords panoramic views southwards over the parkland.

The area known as South Park falls to a valley then rises to a further crest on the southern boundary. It contains a chain of two ponds and an informal 1.5ha lake, laid out in the early 1990s. It also contains several small woods or copses including Lullings Gorse and Spring Copse with mixed exotics and the former Cedar Plantation on the southern boundary.

South Park is an intrinsic part of the significance of the registered park and garden. In addition, the Southern Parkland and its landscape features comprise a number of BAP Priority Habitats (wood pasture and parkland with veteran trees, ancient and native woodland) that are not only important for biodiversity but create evidential value of the earlier managed landscape and the culture and traditions that created it.

In this respect, we consider that South Park's undeveloped, wood pasture, parkland character with copses and specimen trees contributes to the historic and aesthetic values of the wider park and garden and provides part of the important picturesque framework in which the main house and pleasure gardens are set.

Impact of the Proposals on the significance of South Park and the Registered Park and Garden

We can see from the planning history for this site that the former play areas for Borde Hill have been relocated to a different area but positioned generally close to the main central visitor facilities and in areas that are already disturbed or of low significance.

This proposal will instead move these playground facilities further out from the central visitor area into what is currently undeveloped, naturalistic historic parkland.

While we appreciate it is proposed to plant trees around the proposed adventure play area, elements would still be visible in the wider landscape and would add further cumulative harm over and above that caused by the consented infrastructure. The



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level of harm would still be less than substantial under the terms of the NPPF but, taking into account the impacts of the consented scheme, this proposal would increase the level of harm overall.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policy with regards to the Historic Environment. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation (para 210(a)).

It highlights 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 212). As a grade II* registered park and garden, the greatest weight should be given to this when balancing harm against public benefits.

The NPPF requires that all harm to heritage significance should be avoided, where possible, or minimised (paragraph 208). Any remaining harm should have a clear and convincing justification (paragraphs 213) and be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal in the manner set out in paragraph 215.

Historic England's Position on the Proposals

We were previously concerned about the scale and amount of new infrastructure that is being proposed in South Park to deliver the aims of the project and the harm that this would cause to the naturalistic, wood pasture character and the key features that define the historic parkland.

This proposal would cause further cumulative harm over and above that which has already been consented. This cumulative harm would further affect people's ability to understand the historic design intentions for South Park.

We recommend that the play equipment is provided in an alternative, less harmful area such as in an area that has already been previously disturbed and used for play equipment in the past.

We also have concerns that the drive to provide new visitor facilities at this site has resulted in significant built interventions in currently undeveloped areas of the RPG



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rather than seeking to balance this with making better use of areas associated with existing development or areas of relatively low significance.

The use of previously used areas for these play facilities, near to the centre of the site would provide opportunities for the new and diverse audiences (that the proposals are seeking to attract) to better experience and learn about the whole historic gardens and exotic plants at Borde Hill rather than just South Park.

Instead, the proposals would contribute to separating out parts of the park and garden and could add to the perception of South Park more as a play park close to Haywards Heath rather than part of a designed historic estate.

We therefore advise that any further proposals at this site are considered holistically and guided by a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). This would provide an understanding of how the RPG's individual heritage values create its significance. Based on this analysis, the CMP would set out management recommendations to guide the development of any future proposals for the house and RPG.

This could also help inform a master plan for the site going forward so that it is clear what is needed to support the sustainable future of the site and how this can be achieved while maintaining the significance of the RPG and the setting of the house.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We recommend that an alternative, less harmful location is found for the adventure playground, such as in an area that has already been previously disturbed and used for play equipment in the past.

We also recommend that going forward, a Conservation Management Plan is prepared for Borde Hill so that proposals to support the sustainable future of this site are considered holistically and maintain the significance of the RPG and the house.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

Alma Howell



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