

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 19 January 2026 15:09:40 UTC+00:00
To: "Joanne Fisher" <Joanne.Fisher@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/3104 Borde Hill Garden

Hi Jo

Comments on the above application for variation of planning conditions.

Borde Hill Gardens is a II* registered park and garden, at the heart of which sits Borde Hill House, which is Grade II listed. The South Lodge to the estate is also Grade II listed. To the opposite, eastern side of Borde Hill Lane, the Sugworth Farm historic farmstead includes a Grade II listed farmhouse and a number of curtilage listed former farm buildings. The significances of these assets have been discussed by email dated 24/04/2024 in relation to the previous planning application which is the subject of the current proposal for variation of conditions; I will not repeat this discussion here.

Planning permission was granted in 2024 for works within the southern parkland and around the Sugworth farmstead comprising construction of a new visitor and community hub (the ecolodge), outdoor learning and adventure playground, community growing area and propagation polytunnels, new and improved access and connectivity infrastructure, wider landscaping and biodiversity enhancements and associated works.

The current proposal is for amendments to the consented scheme comprising:

- Relocation and expansion of the consented play area within the ancient woodland of Dinosaur Wood to the open parkland to the north, with associated new screening planting;
- New school group learning shelter to the east of the proposed play area within the parkland;
- Minor changes to the layout and specification of the path and vehicle track network within the south parkland;
- Minor changes to the fenestration and doors of the ecolodge; and
- Change to the permitted hours of use for the facilities within South Park from 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week over the summer period and 9am to 3pm, 7 days a week over winter, to 7am to 8pm, 7 days a week, year-round.

To consider these changes in turn:

- During the course of the previous application discussions took place concerning the location and scale of the play area, with particular reference to the impact on the character of the South Park as an area of naturalistic wood pasture, and on the views of this parkland from Borde Hill House and the surrounding formal gardens. In my opinion, whilst I can fully understand the necessity to minimise the impact on the ecology of the site, the relocated and expanded play area raises fresh concerns in terms in both these respects, which are not adequately addressed by the suggested additional planting, or by the information including

photographs of key views contained within the current submission, the majority of which have been taken in summer, and which do not comprise verified views or photomontages accurately representing the visual impact of the proposal throughout the seasons. Given the concerns regarding the impact of this aspect of the proposal, which are echoed in the response from Historic England, I would suggest that further information in the form of verified views or accurate photomontages from agreed viewpoints are requested to allow a fully informed assessment of this aspect of the scheme.

- The proposed school learning shelter is located just to the east of the play area and also within the open parkland. Again, this has the potential to appear as an incongruous and inappropriate element within the historic parkland. Again, further information should be provided in the form of verified views or similar to accurately demonstrated the visual impact of this aspect of the proposal, which I would anticipate will be cumulative with that of the adjacent play area.
- The changes to the path network are considered unlikely to prove contentious in themselves, subject to detail.
- The minor changes to the fenestration of the ecolodge are not considered contentious.
- The issue of lighting within the South Park was a contentious one during the course of the previous application, and I would oppose the extended hours of opening now suggested as these would result in a far more intensive potential use of the area after dark, particularly outside of high summer, with more extensive use of pathway lighting as well as lighting at the ecolodge itself becoming necessary. This will have an adverse impact on the rural, undeveloped character of the registered parkland.

I note the applicant is seeking changes to the timing of discharge of some of the conditions imposed on the original permission to allow for a separate and earlier implementation of the proposals relating to Sugworth Farm as opposed to the works within the South Park. Whilst in principle the separation of the two parts of the scheme raises no heritage concerns, I do not agree that the materials schedule is only of interest with respect to South Park. Sugworth Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building, the setting of which must be protected. Details of materials relating to the works at Sugworth Farm should continue to be required.

In summary, the proposal raises significant concerns in relation to the impact on the character of South Park arising from the relocated and expanded play area, and from the proposed extended hours of use. Further information is however required in respect of the former issue to allow for a fully informed consideration of the proposal.

Thanks,

Emily

Please note that this advice is given at Officer level only and is without prejudice to the formal decision of the District Council.

Submit your planning application online.
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

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