

Land north of Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath

Heritage Technical Note

Introduction

Archaeology South-East (ASE) have been commissioned by Fairfax Properties to prepare a technical note responding to consultation comments by the conservation officer (CO)¹ on heritage impacts of a proposed residential development of land to the north of Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath, henceforth the site (NGR 532610 125866). The original detailed heritage assessment was in response to an earlier version of the masterplan (Rev. T) which included a block of residential properties in the north-west corner of the site and a two-lane roundabout at the junction of Balcombe Road and Borde Hill Lane. A revised masterplan has been issued (Rev. W, see below) which removes entirely the north-western housing provision and reduces the scale of the roundabout to single-carriageway.

Sugworth Farmhouse (Grade II Listed Building Ref. 1193589)

ASE are in agreement with the CO that the setting of the farmhouse includes the area of the site and that there will be an adverse impact accordingly due to the prominence of new development within the view from the farm and its approaches (although the CO fails to acknowledge some loss of rural character through the former industrial exploitation of parts of the site, with a brickworks in the north-west corner represented by a wooded pit and a smaller clay extraction pit adjacent to the roundabout). The CO raised concerns that the rural character of Borde Hill Lane would be adversely impacted – this already has somewhat of a suburban feel due to the existing properties along the eastern side of the lane and the previous masterplan would have infilled this part of the lane. The revised masterplan retains the open space along the eastern side of the lane and, with the wooded extraction pit, preserves the open nature of the north-western part of the site and retains the views of the farm while travelling along Borde Hill Lane, thereby preserving more of the rural character.

¹ Email from Emily Wade to Steven King, dated 25/03/2026.

South Lodge (Grade II Listed Building Ref. 1025508)

ASE and the CO are in agreement that the significance of the lodge relates predominantly to its relationship with the parkland of Borde Hill, with the wider rural landscape making a lesser contribution. The appeal inspector for the previous mast application notes the existing detracting nature of the existing roundabout. While the development will be visible from the lodge, the retention of open space along Borde Hill Lane within the revised masterplan will preserve the existing open buffer between the lodge and its immediate environs and the development.

Borde Hill (Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden Ref. 1000274)*

ASE and the CO are in agreement that the significance of the park is predominantly related to the relationship between the house, gardens and parkland (with the primary views being north-south), with the site lying outside the park perimeter. There is some minor disagreement as to the extent that the wider rural landscape contributes to that significance as it relates to the site. The National Heritage List register² states that '*to the north and east, the site's parkland and woodland merge into the adjacent undulating, wooded farmland*' (as quoted by the CO) but it also states that the park is '*enclosed partly by a dense mixed tree belt (along the southern half of the east boundary)*', which corresponds to the south-eastern boundary opposite the site. This is consistent with our view that the dense perimeter belt on this side precludes significant intervisibility due to the woodland which includes evergreens and also the presence of existing residential properties along part of Borde Hill Lane. Perimeter planting belts, a technique popularised by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the mid-18th century, were intended to provide a screen between the park and the working landscape beyond, excluding the outside world – in the context of Borde Hill, a late 19th and 20th century park and garden, the principle still holds in that the densest screening belts are on the south-eastern side closest to the railway and the encroaching ribbon development along Balcombe Road (since the turn of the 20th century). Consequently, while the permeable boundary between park and wider countryside is readily evident on the northern and north-eastern sides of the park, the south-east has a hard boundary which reduces any contribution made by the site. The retention of existing open space along the lane within the revised masterplan serves to keep the edge of the proposed development away from the park boundary and keeps a sense of separation.

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000274?section=official-list-entry>



Proposed Masterplan (Rev. W, April 2026)

Archaeology South-East

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