

Planning and Heritage Statement

Nymans

Creation of 7 disabled car parking spaces within the
main car park at Nymans Park and Garden



Nymans Mansion
Handcross
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH17 6EB

September 2025

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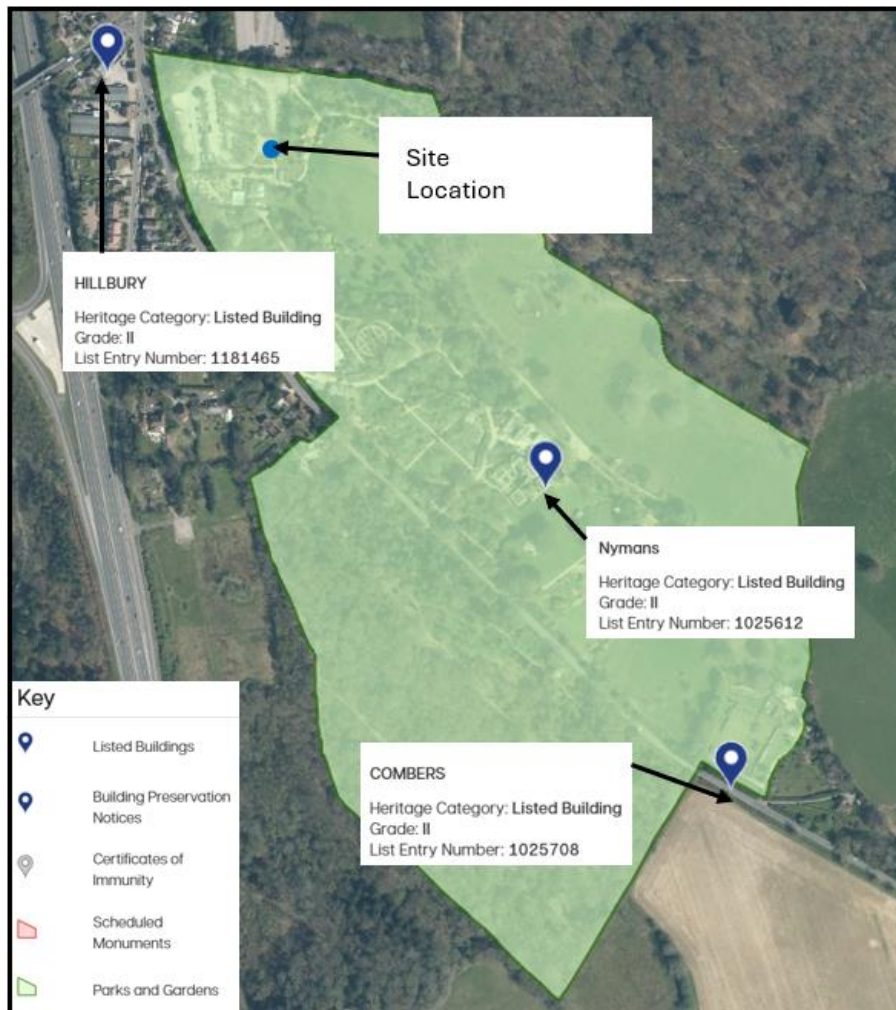
1 Introduction

- 1.1 The National Trust are the owners and custodians of Nymans Estate, located at Handcross, near Haywards Heath. Nymans Mansion and Gardens are a significant tourist attraction in the London and South-East region attracting over 395,000 visitors a year, providing a major contribution to the local economy.
- 1.2 The National Trust are committed to improving access to our places for disabled people, improving access to the outdoors and allowing everyone to connect with nature. This proposal seeks to create 7 additional disabled car parking spaces within the existing main car park close to the entrance of Nymans Garden.
- 1.3 The main car park at Nymans currently has 4 disabled parking spaces which are well used. This proposal seeks to provide 7 additional spaces that will replace standard parking spaces. This will provide a clearly marked area of dedicated disabled parking spaces close to the entrance of Nymans Garden.
- 1.4 The application site is located within Nymans Garden, which is a Registered Grade II* Park and Garden (*list entry: 1000160, Appendix 4*) situated within the High Weald National Landscape. The wider Nymans Estate is partly covered by the Handcross Conservation Area but the location for the proposed disabled parking spaces is outside of the conservation area but within its setting. The whole of Nymans Registered Park and Garden is covered by the West Sussex Archaeological Notification Area.



Photo 1: Location of proposed disabled parking spaces

- 1.5 There are listed buildings nearby including Nymans Mansion a Grade II listed building (*list entry: 1025612, Appendix 3*) and Combers a Grade II listed building (*list entry: 1025708*). Both these listed buildings are within the Historic Park and Garden but some distance from the application site (*approximately 388m Nymans and 700m Combers*). The closest listed building is Hillbury Cottage (*Grade II listed, list entry: 1181465*) which lies approximately 160m west of the application site and is outside of the Registered Park and Garden within the village of Handcross itself.



Map 1: Listed Buildings within the wider Historic Park and Garden

Source Historic England website: [Search the List: Map Search | Historic England](#)

2 Supporting Documents

2.1 This planning application is supporting by the following documents:

Document	Author
Location Plan	National Trust
Block Plan	National Trust
Existing Parking Bays	Baird Design
Proposed Parking Bays	Baird Design
Planning and Heritage Statement	National Trust
Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement	National Trust
Tree Survey	Holt Arboriculture
Tree Constraints Plan	Holt Arboriculture

3 Planning Policy Context

National Policy

3.1 National Planning Policy is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Of most relevance to this proposal is paragraph 135 which states:

‘Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments (f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users’.

3.2 Paragraph 207 is also relevant and states:

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’.

3.3 Paragraph 210 of the NPPF states:

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality’; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’.*

Local Policy

- 3.4 The site is located within the Mid Sussex District. The current development plan for the area is the Mid Sussex District Plan (2014-2031) adopted in March 2018. The following local planning policies will therefore be relevant to this planning application:
- 3.5 Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, permitting development in the countryside, as defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District and is necessary for the purposes of agriculture or is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.6 Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will only permit development where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular:
- the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;
 - the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;
 - character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB, and
 - the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

- 3.7 Policy DP19: Sustainable Tourism supports tourism related development in the countryside where it enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the district.
- 3.8 Policy DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities supports development that provides new and/or enhanced leisure and cultural activities and facilities in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex.
- 3.9 Policy DP26: Character and Design requires all development and surrounding space to be of high-quality design, which creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape.
- 3.10 Policy DP28: Accessibility requires all development to meet and maintain high standards of accessibility so that all users can use them safely and easily.

- 3.11 Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets requires development to protect listed buildings and their setting and requires proposals to have a thorough understanding of the significance of the listed building and its setting.
- 3.12 Policy DP36: Historic Parks and Gardens seeks to protect the special local historic interest of registered parks and gardens, by ensuring that development within or adjacent to a registered park, or park or garden of local historic interest protects and enhances its special features, setting and views into and out of the park or garden.
- 3.13 Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows prohibits development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance.
- 3.14 Policy SD38: Biodiversity seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity by ensuring development contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments.
- 3.15 The application site is located within the designated **Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan** area, as such the following policy within the Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan (2014-2031, made 2019) is also relevant.
- 3.16 Policy 1: Protecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will only permit development where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- 3.17 Aim 6: Handcross: Parking and Improvements, the SPC will support proposals to facilitate additional car parking for the users of Nymans and the High Street.
- 3.18 The **High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-2029)** guides environmental land management within this important landscape and is a material consideration in the planning decision-making process. The following priority is therefore relevant.
- 3.19 People and Access Principles and Investment Priorities 2029 Management and landscape-sensitive improvement of green space infrastructure – to support a range of access needs and recreation opportunities, whilst ensuring infrastructure and activities are consistent with conserving and enhancing the High Weald’s natural beauty and its quiet enjoyment – including catering for a range of needs including ethnically diverse and socially deprived groups, and those with mobility or visual impairments, including the provision of disabled parking spaces, wheelchair/mobility scooter friendly paths and routes, rest points such as benches, and interpretation boards, waymarked trails or routes.

4 The Proposal

- 4.1 The proposal is for 7 new disabled parking spaces within a dedicated area close to the principal entrance to Nymans Gardens. This location will ensure easy and safe access for blue badge holders and those with limited mobility into the gardens.

Dimensions

- 4.2 The site area is level and firm, and the parking bays have been designed to meet Building Regulation Part M. The dimensions for each disabled parking bay is 2.4m x 4.8m with an additional 1.2m width area either side of the space, and at the rear of the space to enable the car doors to be opened wide and any access to the rear of the car to be done safely, particularly for those using ramps or lifts.

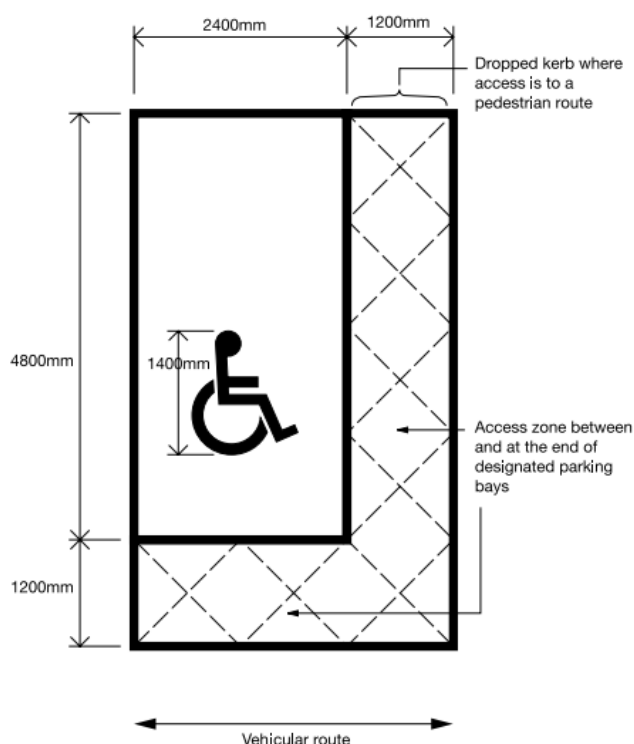


Diagram 1: Dimensions of parking bay designated for disabled people (BR 2010, Volume 2 Access to Buildings other than dwellings, p. 18).

Surface and markings

- 4.3 The car parking spaces will be surfaced with permeable surface course tarmac. The 1.2m wide areas either side of the bays will be marked with white hashed lines. The disabled bays will be clearly marked with the International Symbol of Access, positioned at the centre of the bay and made visible using high-contrast, non-slip paint so that it can be seen in all weathers.

4.4 The scope of works will consist of:

- Installation of Tree Protection Barriers to establish Construction Exclusion Zones and to close access to the construction site for members of the public.
- Excavate the new areas to a formation depth 200mm below finished level. All surplus soil arisings will be carted from site in accordance with Environment Agency regulations.
- Sub-base stone to be laid, levelled and compact well with a suitable mechanical roller/compaction plate a 150mm deep sub-base of MOT type 3 permeable stone over a geo-textile laid to the entire sub-soil surface.
- Surfacing to be laid, levelled and compact well a 55mm deep AC14 open graded (permeable) surface course tarmac.
- Brick edgings to best match those of existing brick edging will be used to separate the parking bays from the existing flower bed as well as define the eastern boundary of the 4 new blue badge bays. The bricks will be laid on edge, butt jointed and on a 150mm concrete foundation haunched to secure. These will be level to ensure no tripping hazard.
- Thermoplastic white line markings to be install to the new bays as per shown on the plan with perimeter hatchings and wheelchair logo to each bay.

5 Nymans Archaeological and Historic Background

- 5.1 Nymans Mansion is a grade II listed building (list entry number: 1025612, see Appendix 3), located within a registered grade II* Park and Garden of special historic interest (list entry number: 1000160, see Appendix 4). Nymans has a beautiful setting within the High Weald National Landscape, within a wider estate. The main elements of historic interest comprise 17 hectares of gardens and ornamental woodlands, 8 hectares of parkland, situated along a level crest which then steeply slopes north to south over the Sussex Weald, commanding long attractive views, eastwards towards Ashdown Forest and south to the South Downs.
- 5.2 The earliest mention of Nymans was around 1385-1387 (James and Whittick, 2008), derived from a 14th-century owner, Philip Nynians, with the earliest record of a house at Nymans recorded in C16, at this time it was a small insignificant agricultural holding. The status of this location rose in the early C19, because of the London to Brighton Road and improved communications. The present estate is an accumulation of tenements and changes in ownership between the 1840s and 1920s. In 1839 George Harrington the owner, enlarged the estate considerably, rebuilding the house in its current position. The Estate was purchased in 1864 by Captain John Dearden.
- 5.3 In 1890, Nymans was purchased by Ludwig Messel a successful stockbroker, who commissioned his brother, Alfred Messel a famous architect in Germany, to enlarge the house in a Germanic style, adding features such as a large conservatory along the west front, a billiard room, and tower on the south-eastern corner. Ludwig Messel was also a plantsman, who considered his planting schemes. He employed a Head Gardener, James Comber in 1895, who retained that position until his death in 1953. Ludwig provided the inspiration for the garden and Comber the horticultural expertise. Ludwig was passionate about plants and spent large sums of money on the garden and worked closely with Comber to breed new cultivars. Together they created what is known as The Nymans Collection, which are plants raised and in connection with Nymans.



Image 1: Nymans Mansion redesigned to reflect Germanic heritage (Garden CMP, 2010, p. 137).

- 5.4 The Messel family lived predominantly at Nymans during the spring and summer months, between their time in London. Planting the arboretum started in the 1890s. The summer borders were planted in the Edwardian period to give maximum colour impact. The spring borders were planted between 1904 and 1915 by Muriel Messel, Ludwigs daughter who took on the directorship of the garden upon the ill health of her father. Ludwig and Annie had six children, the eldest son Leonard, inherited the estate in 1915 upon Ludwigs death.
- 5.5 Leonard and his wife Maud loved their existing house in nearby Balcombe and Maud only agreed to move to Nymans if the house was remodelled in the style of a medieval west country manor. In 1922, Leonard commissioned Norman Evill, a distinguished church architect and antiquary, to redesign the house. Evill's work started with the north-west corner and west entrance but after this phase was completed in 1924, the Messels appointed a different architect, Sir Walter Tapper, a leading church architect, who went on to rebuild the south elevation. By 1927 the rebuilding work was largely complete. Walter Tapper's work was mostly of brick with a stone facing, whereas Evill's work was built of stone throughout. A high point of Tapper's work was the completion of the Great Hall.



Image 2: View from Knot Garden onto terrace, Nymans Mansion remodelled into the style of a medieval west country manor – Country Life 1932 (Garden CMP, 2010, p. 69).

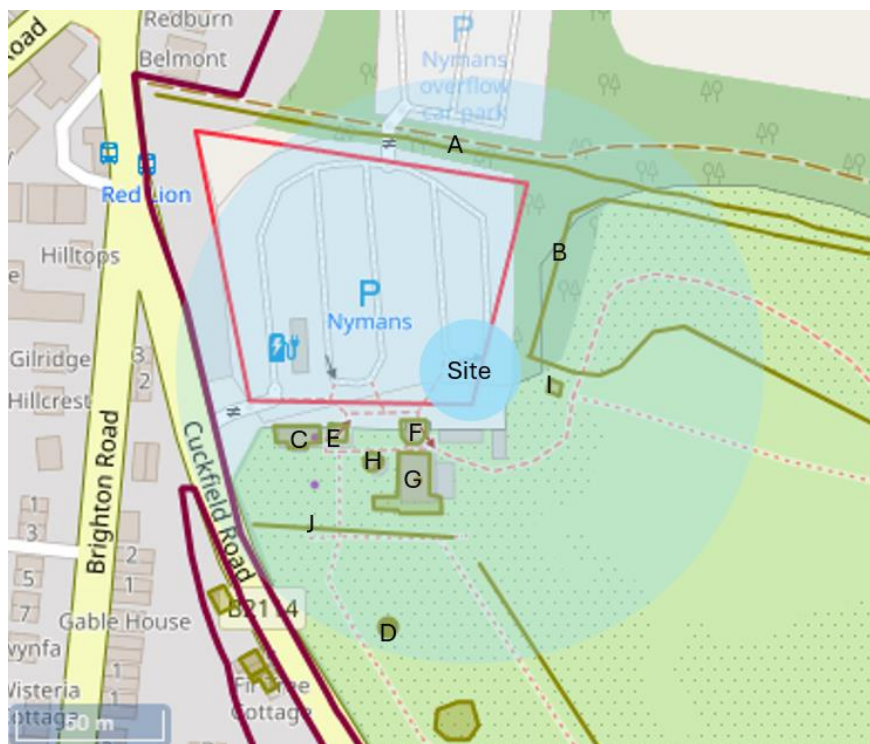
- 5.6 A rose collection was started in the 1920s, and Maud Messel planned the rose garden as part of her romantic vision for the planting schemes surrounding the medieval style house. She filled it with herbs and old-fashioned roses.
- 5.7 Leonard and Maud's children Linley, Oliver and Anne spent much of their childhood at Nymans. As an adult in the 1940s and 1950s Oliver became a famous theatre designer and Anne married into the aristocracy on her marriage to the Earl of Rosse. Her eldest son was the Earl of Snowdon, who married Princess Margaret in 1960.
- 5.8 In 1947, on the morning of February 19 (Leonard's 75 birthday), a fire broke out, destroying most of the house, only 19 years after the last remodelling works finished.

With rationing and restrictions on building materials still in place after the end of the Second World War, the family were unable to rebuild Nymans Mansion. The southern half of the house was preserved as a roofless ruin while the north-east wing was partially repaired and made safe for the family to use as a base when visiting the magnificent garden.

- 5.9 Leonard Messel died in 1953, and Lord Rosse conveyed Nymans to the National Trust which was then opened to the public. Maud Messel died in 1960, and Anne, Countess of Rosse is then appointed Garden Director. The rose garden is redesigned three years later. When Michael 6th Earl of Rosse died in 1979, Anne moved back permanently into the partially ruined house. Lady Rosse died in 1992, at which point Alistair Buchanan took the position of family representative until he passed in 2021.

6 Historic Landscape Features

- 6.1 Historic landscape features within approximately 100m of the application site as annotated in the key below:



Map 2: Site location in relation to historic landscape features

A – Trackway, north side of car park, Nymans Estate: [MNA155647 | National Trust Heritage Records](#)

Trackway (Late 19th C to Unknown – 1873 AD) now used as a public footpath.

B – The Pinetum, Nymans Estate: [MNA155820 | National Trust Heritage Records](#)
Pinetum created 1896.

C, E, F, G, H – Tea Garden and visitor facilities, Nymans Estate: [MNA155818 | National Trust Heritage Records](#)

Created 1966-1967 from former paddock, the Cricket Field.

D – Top Garden, Nymans Estate: [MNA155822 | National Trust Heritage Records](#)

Modern – an area of grass and informal ornamental planting.

I – Messel Temple, Nymans Estate: [MNA202715 | National Trust Heritage Records](#)

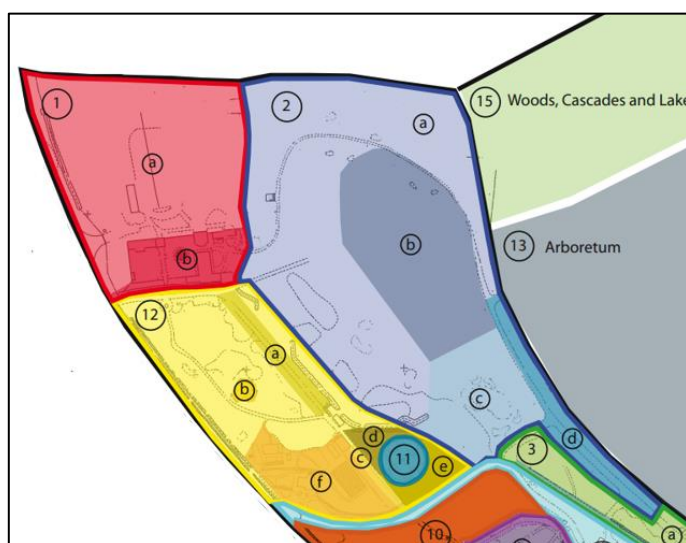
Garden Buildings (Early 20th C – 1901 AD to 1932 AD)

J – Former field boundary, Tea/Top Garden, Nymans Estate: [MNA155819 | National Trust Heritage Records](#)

Field boundary (Post Medieval – 1540 AD to 1900 AD) Predates 1818.

7 Assessment of Heritage Significance

- 7.1 In 2010 the National Trust commissioned The Landscape Agency to prepare a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the gardens and surrounding estate at Nymans to help inform the future development of the gardens. The study identified different character areas throughout the property, the Car Park Character Area has two parts, the Car Park Facilities (1a) and Enterprise Area (1b), as identified on the map below.



Nymans Character Areas (CMP)

Car Park Facilities (1a)

Enterprise Area (1b)

Pinetum (2a)

Map 2: Relevant section of Nymans Character Area Map (Source: Garden CMP, 2010).

7.2 The historic development of the car park is as follows:

'This area was shown as a field, known as Cross Field, on the 1864 Sale Plan (WSRO Add Ms 27108) and the 1890 Estate plan (WSRO Add Ms 27111). It was later used as a cricket pitch. In July 1920, Oliver Messel wrote to his mother, Maud, saying 'how lovely Nymans must be looking except for the cricket. I do hope I shan't be expected to play' (NA: 20/35). The 1957 revised edition of the Ordnance Survey showed the area planted with rows of deciduous trees on the east side and a scattering of deciduous and coniferous trees on the west side. The far eastern corner, adjacent to the Pinetum, was planted with coniferous trees. A new car park (on the present site) and refreshment kiosk were first planned in 1962 as part of the reorganization of the gardening, administration, and visitor facilities. This was planned to increase visitor numbers and revenue but this was not carried due to lack of funds. The initial proposals were eventually carried out in 1967. Previously to this, visitors to the garden had arrived at the north drive entrance and parked along the drive. The belts of trees around the boundaries of the car park have always provided important shelter to the garden. Significant replanting took place after the Great Storm of 1987 to restore the belts. The central trellised kiosk, designed by Philip Jebb, inspired the new entrance building, with the 'marquee' tearoom and shop designed by Robert Adam, which were built in 1993'.



Image 3: Foundations for car park being created (Nymans Archives)

7.3 With regard to the area's historic significance, this is set out below:

'This is an open, active area, which brings visitors into the site. It should provide a stimulating entrance with promise of what is to come but at present it fails in this due to poor maintenance of the car park surface and the buildings, which now seem dated and are not fit for purpose. Cecil Nice planted the interior avenues in the 1920s but these do not screen the car park and are now compromised due to compaction by vehicles. The positive aspects include the Roy Lancaster planting around the north and west boundaries, which provide an important role in sheltering the car park and Pinetum. The area is important in its role as the start and finish of the visitors' experience of the garden'.

7.4 The Garden Conservation Management Plan includes a Statement of Significance which has been extracted in full, provided in Appendix 5. In brief, the key points of significance for the wider Nymans garden are:

- The partly ruined house at Nymans is grade II listed, set within grade II* listed registered Park and Gardens. Cow Wood and Harry's Wood (77ha) are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- The Messel family have been closely involved in the design of the garden and the work is from 1890 to the present day. Their vision combined with professional skills from gardeners and plant hunters, made a garden of great diversity filled with an exceptional plant collection.
- Between 1895 and 2005 there were only three Head Gardeners at Nymans: James Comber (1895 to 1953); Cecil Nice (1953 to 1980); and David Masters (1980 to 2005). This continuity adds to the significance of the garden.
- The Messel family as plant collectors and gardeners. Ludwig Messel's particular interest in experimenting with the hardiness of plants combined with Comber's skills as a gardener, together formed a rare collection of plants and trees.
- A prominent element of the garden is its distinctive collection of plants continuously assembled by three generations of the family according to their taste and interests. The Messels subscribed to most of the important plant-hunting expeditions of their time, and the unique quality of the plant collection enhanced the reputations of James and Harold Comber. The significance of the plant collection is due to the number of rare and very rare plants grown well, the diversity of plants made possible by the special growing conditions, and the range of species, types, and origins of the plants.
- Nymans currently holds a nationally important collection of South American (Chilean, Argentinian, and Andean) plants as well as extensive collections of *Rhododendron* sp., their own raised plant collection, Heath plants, *Camellia* sp., *Magnolia* sp., *Rhododendron* hybrids, *Berberis* sp. *Cupressus* sp. and cvs., *Acer* sp. and *Quercus* sp., *Rosa* sp., borderline tender shrubs. The gardens include 33 Champion trees, of exceptional height or girth, and many other trees and shrubs which are not Champions but are of exceptional form.
- Nymans is one of a cluster of Sussex gardens with outstanding plant collections. These are all individually important but even more so as a group because the owners helped, competed with, and influenced each other.
- A series of major changes between 1947 and 1987 have had a profound effect on the gardens. In 1947, a fire gutted the principal rooms of the house. The house was only partially restored and although the climber covered façades remain intact, the house is an empty shell.
- The Messel family called upon professional architects to design the various phases of the development of the house, but the design of the gardens was largely their

own. With the help of their head gardeners, their knowledge of the requirements for the plants, and with their own artistic and design skills within the family, they were able to add areas to the gardens as they were needed.

- Alfred and Oliver Messel were professional designers and Maud Messel and Lady Rosse were gifted amateurs.
- Alastair Buchanan, who took over as garden Director from Lady Rosse in 1987, has added various features to the garden including the Topiary and Davidia Grove and the Funerary Garden.

8 Assessment of Impact

8.1 The National Trust has a duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to car parks to ensure that there is accessibility for disabled motorists. The proposed disabled parking bays are therefore an essential ancillary use to this important historic tourist attraction helping ensure everyone has ease of access into our special places, particularly for those with disabilities or limited mobility. This is in conformity with the NPPF (para. 135) which requires places to be safe, inclusive and accessible and promote health and well-being. The principle of development is therefore considered to be established as the bays need to be in this rural location within the existing car park.

8.2 Consideration has been given to the character, appearance and setting of the Registered Grade II* Park and Garden as well as Nymans House, a grade II listed building. The existing car park is a separate functioning area of the property, and it is considered not unreasonable to have disabled parking bays within the car park area. The disabled parking bays will not impact on the rare and important plant and tree collections which contribute greatly to the historic significance of Nymans Garden. Indeed, the installation of the parking bays will enable more people to see and appreciate the plants, which will ultimately help in their conservation. There are listed buildings within the wider garden and village of Handcross, these are some distance from the proposal screened by existing trees. The proposed disabled parking bays are minor in scale and the proposal is effectively resurfacing and marking up the existing ground surface of a small section of the car park. It is therefore considered that the significance of these heritage assets and their setting is sustained. This aligns with policy DP34 which seeks to protect listed buildings and their setting as well as policy DP36 of the District Plan which seeks to protect the special local historic interest, character, appearance and setting of registered parks and gardens within the District.

8.3 A primary objective of the District Plan is to protect the countryside by minimising the amount of land take from development and balancing the need to enhance the

countryside by supporting the rural economy by accommodating well-designed, appropriate forms of development. The proposed disabled car parking area is modest in scale. The existing car park is enclosed and screened from the wider area by a shelter belt of trees to the perimeter. The design of the disabled parking bays is set by national standards under Building Regulations Approved Document M and as such there is limited scope to change the design of the actual bays. However, consideration has been given to ensure where new materials are introduced, they will blend into the existing rural environment where possible. It is therefore considered that the proposal will have a minimal visual impact on the qualities and characteristics or natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This aligns with policy DP12 and policy DP16 of the adopted District Plan, and policy 1 of the made Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan.

- 8.4 Policy DP26 Character and Design requires all development and surrounding spaces to be well designed to reflect the distinctive character of place. The proposal is located within the existing car park and protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area, including Handcross village. The proposals will not cause any harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and as such it is considered that the proposal complies with Policy DP26.
- 8.5 This planning application is supported by a Tree Survey which was undertaken in line with British Standard 5837 (2022) *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition, and Construction - Recommendations*, and shows that no remedial works to trees is required for the construction of the disabled bays. The proposed works will protect trees and there will be no damage, or loss of trees as a result of this proposed development, this aligns with policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows.
- 8.5 Consideration has been given to protect and enhance biodiversity, in line with Policy DP38. Particular attention has been paid to the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy to inform the design and to meet new statutory requirements of The Environment Act 2021. The new disabled car parking spaces are largely on the footprint of the existing car park. The proposal has sought to avoid loss of habitat which has been kept to a minimum, with total loss being less than 25sqm and no impact to priority habitat. A BNG Exemption Statement supports this planning application and demonstrates that the proposal meets the exemption criterion stipulated by The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exceptions) Regulations 2024 and therefore the de-minimis exception applies.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement has been prepared to support the full planning application to install 7 dedicated disabled car parking spaces within the existing car park at the historic garden Nymans, Handcross, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6EB. A core aim of the National Trust is to ensure everyone is welcome to our places, providing easy access to Nymans Registered Park and Garden for disabled people and those who struggle with mobility and this proposal will help deliver this aim.
- 9.2 The proposal is fully aligned with Government objectives and legislation relating to creating places that are safe, inclusive and accessible thus contributing towards achieving sustainable development.
- 9.3 The proposed development is minor in scale and following the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 it is reasonable for the National Trust to provide parking provision for disabled visitors at this popular tourist attraction. This proposed disabled car parking will not increase traffic in the area or damage the surrounding site.
- 9.4 The proposed works will not cause harm or adverse impacts on the historic setting of the Handcross Conservation Area and will preserve the significance and special character of heritage assets, listed buildings and their setting at Nymans and within the wider surrounding area, including Nymans Grade II listed building (List Entry Ref: 1025612) and Combers a Grade II listed building (List Entry Ref: 1025708), and Hillbury Cottage a Grade II listed buildings (List Entry Ref: 1181465) located within Handcross village itself, as well as protecting the historic interests of Nymans Historic Park and Garden which has Grade II* listed designation.
- 9.5 This Statement has assessed the proposed development against national and local development plan policies and the proposal is considered to conform with all relevant policies contained within the NPPF, the Mid Sussex District Plan (2014-2031) adopted 2018, the Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan (2014-2031), made 2019, as well as policies contained within the High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-2029).

Appendix 1

THE NATIONAL TRUST Statement of Significance

Nymans

Nymans Garden is one of the great gardens of the Sussex Weald. Created by Ludwig Messel, in the late Victorian era, it was extended by Leonard and Maud Messel and then further developed under the guidance of Ludwig's granddaughter Anne. Over the last 100 years this family garden has matured into an intimate, inspiring and inviting fusion of different garden styles. The family home, an imitation medieval manor house, was - and still is - the focus for the garden. The house, half ruined by fire, now provides a uniquely dramatic and mysterious setting for some magnificent specimens of climbing plants.

With a pioneering reputation for collecting, growing and propagating exotic and rare species of plants from around the world, the plant collection at Nymans is exceptional. Favourable climate and soil conditions combine to create ideal growing conditions for rare species. The collection is well documented and includes plants collected by some of the greatest plant hunters of the early twentieth century. The wild garden, shaped by a need to find homes for many of these plants, is an unparalleled collection of exotic plants growing in semi-tamed surroundings.

The lives of the family revealed in the rooms now open in the house and in the wider Nymans estate give an insight into how immigrants of the time adapted and became accepted into society. Encompassing the period of the two World Wars, the history of the family, the estate and their employees can be closely allied to the activities of the time and importantly to the war effort of those left at home. Spanning the War years and after, Oliver Messel's career as a theatrical designer offers a tantalising peep into the glamorous world of the theatrical set.

The woodland valleys, with SSSI status, are also much appreciated by visitors, particularly the local community. The woods provide an unusual combination of native woodland, interspersed with exotic trees planted by the Messel family. Rocky outcrops provide ideal conditions for rare ferns. Ponds, man-made cascades, streams and lakes all add to the attraction of the woods and provide a diverse range of habitats for wildlife. Traces of the medieval iron industry, common in the Weald, are still evident in the landscape and place-names in the wood.

The estate has over 30 other vernacular buildings. A number of these buildings are significant in their own right, with interesting histories. Notably, Old House, situated in the woods, has historical links with the iron industry, the Messel family and latterly Lord Snowdon and the current Royal family.

Now owned and managed by the National Trust, Nymans is still a family garden; relaxed, unpretentious in design; with imperfections, secret places and a stunning plant collection. The garden and estate is much visited and loved for its beauty and atmosphere of peace and relaxation. For many people it simply provides a refuge from the pressures of modern living and increasing urban development in the surrounding area.

Appendix 2

THE NATIONAL TRUST Spirit of Place Statement

Nymans

“A crafted work of art and theatre”¹

Designed and fashioned by talented and creative people, Nymans is undoubtedly a wonderful stage for nature’s seasonal changes. “...a home, reflecting the personalities and whims of those that have trod its paths and the aspirations of its makers and improvers.”² With no regard for sticking to the rules, creativity flourishes: quirkiness is encouraged and experimentation is key. Nymans has always been a place to be inventive and try something new – so long as it’s beautiful.

A garden “as enchanting and as full of surprises to the ignorant as to the most enlightened of highbrows,”³ Nymans’ exuberant floral displays and gloriously captivating views are designed to impress – while its many rooms, corners and archways offer precious intimate and secret places to restore you. With all its eccentricities and idiosyncrasies, a sense of humour shines through: a place to pause from the drama of life with a magical draw for people young and old – it is cherished and loved by many.

The woods compliment the bold liveliness of the gardens by providing an opportunity for escape and tranquillity. A place for nature to shine in its own light; only the gentlest of touches have been used to enhance its beauty.

At centre stage of the estate, the house sits confidently, elegant and proud, the drama of the ruins adding further intrigue to its romantic past. Inside the atmosphere radiates with the creative spirit, collecting tastes and stylish flourishes of the Messel family. In a show of rich contrast – light and dark, rustic and refined, comfort and elegance sit side by side.

Nymans’ warm welcoming and familiar atmosphere reminds you of what’s important: allowing you to connect with family, friends and your own imagination. With a myriad of places to explore, the gardens, house and woods are brought together across the property with passion, by a team who strive to be innovative and to deliver excellence for all.

“A triumph of hope”⁴ or a “story of bloody-mindedness,”⁵ whichever way you look at it, Nymans has a spirit so great that it has overcome the greatest of obstacles. From scorching fire and sad decline to devastating storms, Nymans has endured. The tragedies that have befallen it have all left their mark, but they have also contributed to its whole: we accept and celebrate the imperfections and quirks of character that are an intrinsic part of Nymans’ soul... ‘Here, love and beauty dwell.

¹ Country Life, 1932 Christopher Hussey

² Anne, Countess of Rosse

³ Anne, Countess of Rosse

⁴ Muriel Messel

⁵ Alistair Buchannan

Appendix 3

Historic England Statutory Listing

Nymans

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1025612

Date first listed: 29-Sep-1981

Statutory Address: Nymans, Staplefield Road, Handcross, RH17 6EB

County: West Sussex

District: Mid Sussex (District Authority)

Parish: Slaugham

National Grid Reference: TQ 26597 29353

List entry Description

This list entry was subject to a Minor Enhancement on 20/04/2019

TQ 22 NE 10/215

SLAUGHAM Handcross STAPLEFIELD ROAD Nymans, 29.9.81

There was a medieval house on this site. Some portions of this, notably the C15 hall, survive inside the present building. But that house was largely rebuilt in 1839. Of this rebuilding there survives the north or service wing. This is of two storeys and four windows. Stuccoed. Slate roof. Sash windows on first floor with glazing bars. Pointed casement windows and pointed doorway on ground floor. The main or south wing was rebuilt by the Messel family in 1890 and again in 1925-30. The first rebuilding was designed by the important German-Jewish architect, Alfred Messel, whose brother Ludwig Messel then owned the property.

The second rebuilding was in Cotswold Manor House style. Architect Sir Walter Tapper. A fire occurred in 1947 which burned out the south-west wing. The house was left to the National Trust by Colonel Messel in 1954. The main or south front is E-shaped with projections of unequal length. Two storeys and attic. Four windows. Stone Horsham slab roof. Casement windows. Three gabled projections of unequal length. The east and longest one is still a burned out roofless shell.

Sources

Other

Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, Part 44 West Sussex, Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Listing National Grid Reference: TQ 26597 29353

Appendix 4

Historic England Statutory Listing

Nymans

Heritage Category: Park and Garden

Grade: II*

List Entry Number: 1000160

Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Statutory Address: Nymans, Staplefield Road, Handcross, RH17 6EB

County: West Sussex

District: Mid Sussex (District Authority)

Parish: Slaugham

National Grid Reference: TQ 26538 29273

Details

A late C19 and early to mid C20 informal and ornamental plantsman's garden, laid out by the Messel family.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Nymans probably took its name from the family of Robert le Nynweman or Nyman in the early C14. The land was bought by William Portyer in 1323-4 then, from 1597 until the end of the C17, it was owned by the Gatland family who built on the site of the present house. In 1799 the estate was inherited by Elizabeth Ellyat, subsequently passing through the hands of several owners including, from 1839 to 1852, those of George Harrington who largely rebuilt the house, considerably enlarged the estate and began planting shelter belts of trees and shrubs. In 1890, Nymans was purchased by Ludwig Messel, who extended the house and, influenced by Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee (qv) and William Robinson at Gravetye (qv), laid out the structure of the present gardens. On his death in 1916, Nymans was inherited by his son, Colonel Leonard Messel and his wife Maud, who again rebuilt the house and further developed the gardens with a wide range of newly introduced plants, particularly those from the southern continents brought back by Harold Comber (the son of Ludwig Messel's head gardener, James Comber). On Colonel Messel's death in 1953, Nymans became the home of his daughter Anne, Countess of Rosse and her husband and in 1954, Lord Rosse conveyed Nymans to the National Trust although continuing to direct and develop the gardens. Lord Rosse died in 1979, and since the death of the Countess of Rosse in 1992 the gardens have been managed by the Trust.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Nymans lies on the B2114 on the southern edge of Handcross village and immediately south-east of the junction of the B2114

with the B2110 and the main A23 London to Brighton road. The c 26ha site, comprising c 17ha of gardens and ornamental woodland and 8ha of parkland, lies along the level crest and on the steeply falling slopes of a north to south ridge of the Sussex Weald, with garden land to both west and east of the B2114. There are extensive, distant views eastwards towards Ashdown Forest and south to the South Downs. The boundaries with the B2114 are lined with clipped hedges, the site being otherwise enclosed by timber or wire agricultural fencing. A public footpath with a screen of trees runs along a short stretch of the northern boundary beyond which are village houses and gardens while to the east, south and west, the site's parkland and woodland merge into a surrounding landscape of well-wooded farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The public entrance is from the B2114 at the north end of the site, some 180m south of Handcross High Street. Entrance gates open eastwards onto a short drive with a car park on the north side and the Tea Garden on the south side. Nymans was approached in the C19 by the entrance at South Lodge, some 350m further south along the B2114. North Lodge (170m south of the present entrance) and its drive were built by 1909 and until 1954 were used as the main entrance for garden visitors, this being transferred to the present entrance from 1954. The Tea Garden was developed in 1971 (with buildings designed by Lord Snowdon) and extended in 1993.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Nymans (listed grade II) sits on the level crest of the ridge and towards the southern end of its gardens. It is a largely two-storey building of Somerset stone, with projecting wings to the south-east, south-west and north-west and with walled entrance courtyards on the east and west fronts. A medieval house existed on the site, some portions of which survive within the present building, but the house was largely rebuilt in 1839. In the 1890s it was enlarged by the architect Ernest George (with a tower on the south-east corner and a massive conservatory along the west front). Rebuilt again in 1925-30 in the Cotswold Manor House style by the architects Norman Evill and Walter Tapper (the latter designed the Great Hall), on the same plan but with the principal entrance moved from the west to the east side, much of the house was destroyed by fire in 1947. The southern half is now preserved as a roofless ruin while the north-east wing, repaired after the fire as a home for the Messels, was restored in 1997 and opened to the public.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The north-east front of the house opens onto a walled and paved courtyard and steps leading north-eastwards down into the Laurel Walk, which runs both north-west and south-east from the courtyard and terminates in statuary at each end. South-east of the courtyard steps, and on a vista line north-eastwards from the main lawn (opposite a break in the Laurel Walk hedge), an early C20 balustraded bastion, known as the Prospect, overlooks the park.

The ruined south-east front of the house, abundantly planted with wall shrubs and climbers, opens onto a gravelled path lined with four topiary yews. South-westwards along this front, yew hedging topped with clipped finials extends around the projecting south-west wing to form an enclosed courtyard which contains a square, box-edged knot garden, laid out in 1996. North-west of the knot garden, the south-west front opens onto a walled forecourt, restored in 1996 to its appearance in 1932 (CL photographs) with a grass plat quartered by stone paths and planted with four bay trees and aromatic plants. A stone dovecote is built

into the wall in the north-west corner. Beyond the house to the south-east and south-west is the main lawn which is dotted with conifers, largely replanted after the 1987 storm. On the north-east side of the lawn, some 40m south-east of the south-east wing of the house (the Great Hall), a camellia shrubbery encloses the Sunk Garden which is laid to lawn with a circular bedding display centred on a marble urn and is overlooked from the east side by a triple-arched stone loggia, built in the 1920s as a summerhouse.

South-east of the Sunk Garden, the former Tennis Lawn is now laid out to lawn surrounded by mixed shrubberies while to the south of the Main Lawn is the Heather Garden, its narrow grass paths winding between and around large island beds of heaths and rhododendron. Laid out for Ludwig Messel in 1903-4 as one of the first of its type, possibly by James Pulham (1873-1957; Head Gardener pers comm, 1997), it contains stock grown from the seed collections made by George Forrest, Frank Kingdon-Ward and Joseph Rock. The garden is centred on a mound embellished with rockery stone and crowned by a square timber pergola structure built around a tree (structure and tree replaced 1980) from which there are fine views over the garden and distant landscape. South-west of the Heather Garden is the Croquet Lawn which is enclosed from the Main Lawn on its north-west side by shrubberies and along its south-west side, running parallel to the road, by a c 50m long, climber-covered pergola. Built in 1903 and restored after storm damage in 1989/90, it is constructed of coursed stone and rustic timber piers, with rustic timber horizontals.

On the north-west side of the house and Main Lawn is the c 0.65ha Wall Garden which is enclosed on its north-east, north-west and south-west perimeters by castellated brick walls. It is laid to lawns dotted with specimen trees and is quartered by paths, the 80m long main, north-west to south-east path flanked by flower borders. The central crossing point of the paths features a marble fountain and basin (which had replaced a former sundial by 1909) framed by four topiary yew orbs. North-west of the Wall Garden the main path, lined by mixed summer borders, continues on a straight course, passing on its north-east side the circular, yew-hedge-enclosed Rose Garden. Laid out in 1989, on the site of Maud Messel's rose garden of the 1920s, it is quartered by gravel paths and embellished with pergola arches and a central fountain. North of the Rose Garden and laid out in the form of an east-facing horseshoe on the crest and eastern slopes of the ridge is the Pinetum which, planted by Ludwig Messel from 1895, has been almost completely replanted since its destruction in the storm of 1987. A path running around the western and northern perimeter of the Pinetum (with a small temple designed by Alfred Messel in 1917) returns along the eastern boundary of the gardens (towards the house) where it runs along the Lime Walk, the present trees planted in the early C20 on the line of a walk or drive shown established in 1874 (OS 1st edition). South-west of the Pinetum and enclosed from it and from the Tea Garden to the north-west by tall, clipped holly hedges is the Top Garden which, begun by Ludwig Messel in the early C20, is planted with specimen trees and shrubs.

On the south-west side of the B2114 an area of former semi-natural woodland, from which there are extensive views to the South Downs, is planted with conifers and an understorey of shrubs including rhododendrons. Now (1997) the Wild Garden, the woodland was planted up in the mid C20 by Colonel Messel as trial areas and nursery beds and was known as The Rough.

PARK The park lies below the gardens on the steep, east-facing slopes of the ridge and on the continuation of its crest to the south-east of the gardens. The upper slopes are open in character with a few isolated mature oaks and a few clumps, some of these, at the south-east end, planted after the 1987 storm. On the lower slopes and merging with the adjacent woodland, the present loose scatter of trees forms part of Ludwig Messel's collection of exotics planted in the early C20.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden lies at the extreme south-east end of the site and forms a c 40 x 50m stone- and brick-walled enclosure, with a gardener's cottage built into the south-west wall and with remnants of a glasshouse on the outer side of the south-east wall. Shown established in 1874 (OS 1st edition), it is now (1997) leased as separate, domestic accommodation.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 72 (10 September 1932), pp 292-7; (17 September 1932), pp 320-5; (24 September 1932), pp 346-52 P Coats, Great Gardens of Britain (1963), pp 119-21 I Nairn and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Sussex (1965), p 479 T Wright, Gardens of Britain 4, (1978), pp 163-70 Nymans, Storm Damage Grant Aid Report, (National Trust 1987; 1991) Nymans, guidebook, (National Trust 1992; 1997)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1874, published 1879 2nd edition published 1899 3rd edition published 1912 OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1911

Description written: January 1998 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: June 2000

Legacy

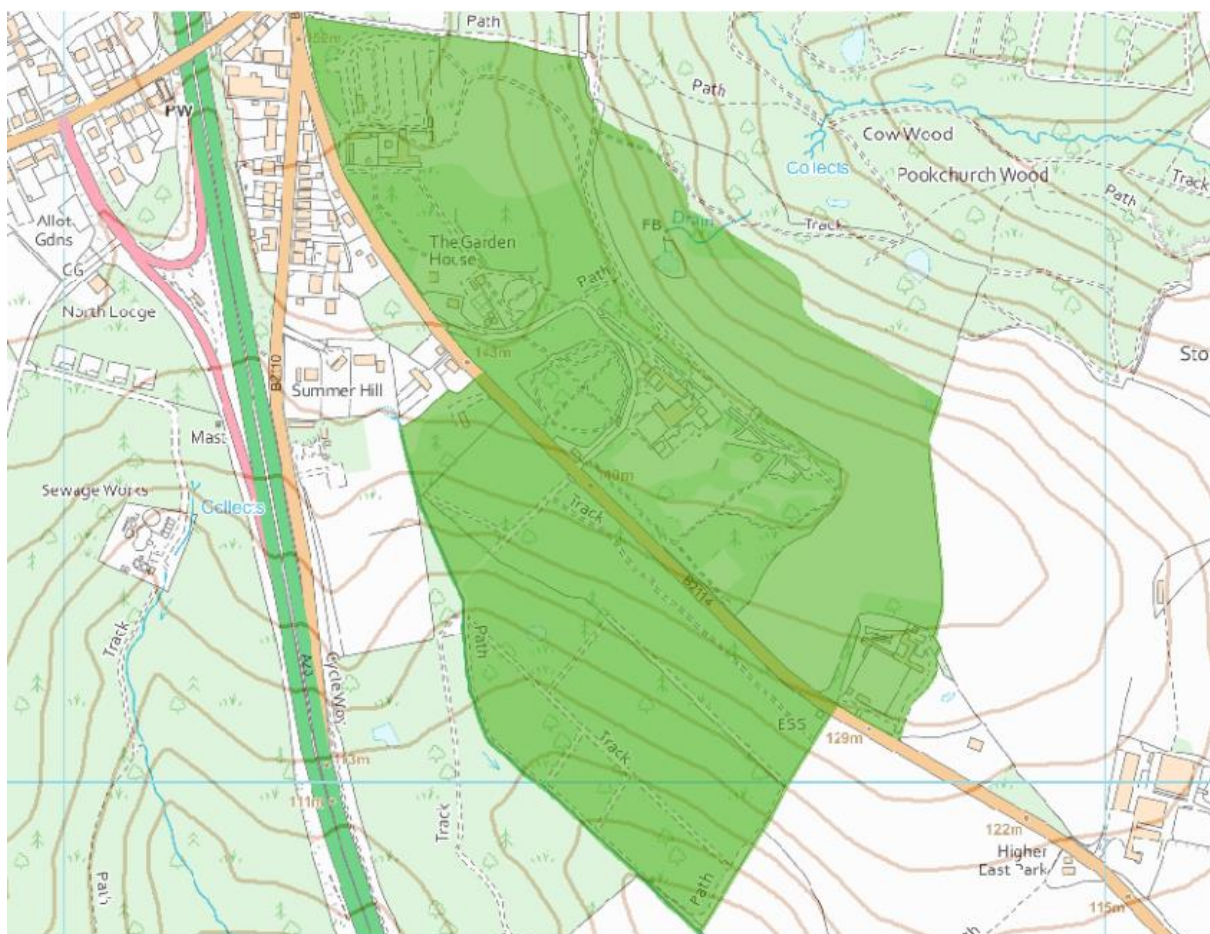
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: **1057**

Legacy System: **Parks and Gardens**

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.



End of official list entry

Appendix 5

Nymans Garden Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance is included within the Nymans: Garden Conservation Management Plan, The Landscape Agency, 2010 (p.30-32) and has been extracted and set out in full below:

'DESIGNATIONS

The partly ruined house at Nymans is listed grade II and lies within the gardens and landscape, which are grade II on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and as such are considered to be of Exceptional Historic Interest. Cow Wood and Harry's Wood (77 ha) are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest*

THE MESSELS AT NYMANS

The gardens embody the Messel family's values, lifestyle, contacts, tastes and interest, as well as reflecting their high ambitions and the status they sought. Each new owner since the mid C19 has altered the external appearance of the house at Nymans, but they have built up the garden gradually. The Messel family have been closely involved in the design of the garden and the work is from 1890 to the present day. Their vision and design combined with professional skills from gardeners and plant hunters, made a garden of great diversity filled with an exceptional plant collection, with superb controlled views, deep lime free soil and good frost drainage.

HEAD GARDENERS

Between 1895 and 2005 there were only three Head Gardeners at Nymans: James Comber (1895 to 1953); Cecil Nice (1953 to 1980); and David Masters (1980 to 2005). Ed Ikin was appointed in 2005. This continuity adds to the significance of the garden, together with the use of innovative horticultural methods and maintenance of a very diverse plant collection without excessive use of natural resources.

James Comber was an exceptional gardener, who was awarded the VMH in 1936 (one of only six gardeners to receive it between 1914 and 1945). His influence on the gardens is still apparent today in the plant collection and in the areas that were laid out to receive the plants. He also provided continuity between Ludwig and Leonard Messel, and during the war years. His son, Harold Comber, was one of the principal plant hunters of the early to mid C20 and was a gifted botanist and horticulturalist. He grew up and started his working life at Nymans and later supplied seeds from his expeditions to South America and Australia. He looked especially for 'Garden-Worthy' plants for breeding and knew that they would be grown on well at Nymans to provide excellent forms of the plants.

THE MESSEL FAMILY AS PLANT COLLECTORS AND GARDENERS

Ludwig Messel's particular interest in experimenting with the hardiness of plants combined with Comber's skills as a gardener, the fertile soil, and benign micro-climate, and meant that he was able to grow plants that had previously been thought too tender for the conditions. Most were new introductions that came from Veitch's nursery, and were housed in the Shrub House or Cool Shrub House in the Top Garden, with periods outside in milder weather. When the plants were thriving, they were planted out, usually in the shelter of the Wall Garden. Despite inevitable losses, Messel was willing to take risks, and the gardeners' skill meant that enough survived to form a rare collection of plants and trees. Ludwig and James Comber were also keen hybridizers, and Nymans became the home of an increasing collection of their hybrids. Messel began two collections of plants, which were housed in ways that were unique to England at that time and on the scale at Nymans: the Heath Garden, established by 1902, was the first substantial one in the country, and the Succulent bed or house (a sandstone rock covered with a span roof in the winter) in the Top Garden was also an original feature. Finally, he was one of the first to use mass planting of ornamental trees and shrubs, as seen in the planting scheme along the new drive in 1904. William Robinson noted Ludwig Messel's willingness to experiment, not being bound by preconceived restrictions, as one of his great strengths as a horticulturalist.

Leonard Messel's interest in gardening started when he inherited Nymans. His passion for horticulture survived the destruction of his home and most of his possessions in the 1947 fire, when his diaries reveal almost daily visits to Nymans to work on the garden with Comber. Leonard raised his own plants, and continued importing foreign plants, through nurseries or directly from plant-hunting expeditions. Letters in the Nymans archive record exchanges of plants with Arthur Hill (RBG Kew), John Williams (Caerhays Castle), P D Williams (Lanath, Cornwall), Lionel de Rothschild (Exbury, Hants), and many others, as well as prominent nurseries such as Hilliers and Robert Veitch & Son, and plant-hunters. The new plants were established throughout the gardens but especially in the Wild Garden, which he had purchased on the other side of the road from the garden. Little visited now, this area retains many of the rarest plants at Nymans. Leonard also collected bulbs, especially Lilies and Tulips, and with his wife Maud established a collection of species and old roses, with many rarities amongst them, and at a time when most rosarians were concentrating on Hybrid Teas. Lord and Lady Rosse continued the plant collection, introducing plants from Birr Castle, County Offaly, Ireland, and those that they had collected on their travels. They extended the collections of Hydrangeas, Hoherias, Magnolias, Acers, Camellias, and Eucryphias.

PLANT COLLECTION AND PLANT HUNTERS

A prominent element of the garden is its distinctive collection of plants continuously assembled by three generations of the family according to their taste and interests. Roy Lancaster believes that the collection is in the top five in gardens open to the public in England. Of the properties owned by the National Trust, only Mount Stewart in county Down

has a comparable plant collection. The Messels subscribed to most of the important plant-hunting expeditions of their time, and the unique quality of the plant collection enhanced the reputations of James and Harold Comber. They bred 'garden-worthy' plants through innovation and experimentation and pushed the boundaries in experimenting with the hardiness of plants. The significance of the plant collection is due to the number of rare and very rare plants grown well, the diversity of plants made possible by the special growing conditions, and the range of species, types, and origins of the plants. They include trees, shrubs of all sizes, perennials, and bulbs, encompassing important collections from South America (Chile, Argentina, and the Andes), Australasia (S.E. Australia and Tasmania), and Asia (Himalayas, China, and Japan). The versatility of the soil means that plants with very different requirements can be grown near each other.

Nymans currently holds a nationally important collection of South American (Chilean, Argentinian, and Andean) plants as well as extensive collections of Rhododendron sp., their own raised plant collection, Heath plants, Camellia sp., Magnolia sp., Rhododendron hybrids, Berberis sp. Cupressus sp. and cvs., Acer sp. and Quercus sp., Rosa sp., borderline tender shrubs. There has always been a strong aspiration for excellence and the collection has also been thoroughly recorded for the last 100 years, providing a valuable source for future research. The gardens include 33 Champion trees, of exceptional height or girth, and many other trees and shrubs which are not Champions but are of exceptional form. Plants are still trialled for good forms and good colours, with the best being kept. Strong links continue with RBG, Edinburgh, and Nymans is currently (2010) trialling new South American herbaceous plants for them.

SUSSEX GARDENS AND NEIGHBOURS

Nymans is one of a cluster of Sussex gardens with outstanding plant collections. These are all individually important but even more so as a group because the owners helped, competed with, and influenced each other. The neighbouring gardens included Leonardslee (Edmund Loder), Gravetye (William Robinson), Wakehurst Place (Gerald Loder), High Beeches (Giles Loder), Sheffield Park (Arthur Soames), Compton's Brow (Johnny Millais), South Lodge (Frederick Godman), and Borde Hill (Stevenson Clarke). The Nyman's visitors' books record the visits of these and other friends, eminent in the gardening world, such as Arthur W Hill, the director of RBG Kew. Initially the neighbouring gardens were a source of inspiration for Ludwig Messel, and his Pinetum, Arboretum, and Rock Garden were the result of his neighbours' interests in these areas. Later, Nymans led the way, with the Heath Garden, Succulent House, new plant instructions, Nymans hybrids, and experiments with plant hardiness.

FIRE AND STORM

A series of major changes between 1947 and 1987 have had a profound effect on the gardens. In 1947, a fire gutted the principal rooms of the house. The house was only partially

restored and although the climber covered façades remain intact, the house is an empty shell. The irreplaceable Messel library of horticultural and botanical books was lost in the fire. When Leonard Messel and James Comber died in 1953 one of the great gardening partnerships ended. The house and garden were gifted to The National Trust in 1953 and changed from being a family garden visited by very few to a very popular garden attracting mass attendance. The Great Storm of 1987 destroyed many trees and fundamentally disrupted the garden. Since then areas of the garden such as the Pinetum, have had a new beginning. The work involved propagation, re-introduction and replanting to renew the plant collection and improve its arrangement.

THE MESSEL FAMILY AS DESIGNERS

Several members of the Messel family were talented designers and their designs have been incorporated into the gardens. Alfred and Oliver Messel were professionals and Maud Messel and Lady Rosse were gifted amateurs.

Ludwig's brother, Alfred Messel (1853-1909) established an architectural practice in Berlin in 1886 and designed several highly influential buildings including the first steel-framed building in Berlin (the second Wertheim department store, 1896–7). After 1900 he adopted a simplified Neo-Classical, Greek Revival style, used in the AEG office building (1906–7), the National Bank (1907–8), and the Pergamon Museum. At Nymans he drew up three designs, which are dated in another hand c1900. These were 'Two Designs for a Proposed Garden-House' and a design for a 'Proposed Garden Terrace' (Nymans Archive L/10/1). These proposals were not executed as drawn but variants were built as the Temple in the Pinetum and the Prospect.

Oliver Messel (1904-1978) trained as a painter and converted a building in the kitchen garden into a studio in 1919 (NA: Family Letters 19/22). He moved into theatre design and became the leading British costume and stage set designer of the mid C20. He painted a watercolour of the borders and fountain in the Wall Garden and altered some windows in the house, but it is likely that Nymans not only influenced his later work but also further benefited from his designs. There is a small collection of his work at Nymans but the majority (around 10,000 items) is in the V&A.

Maud Messel's designs were an integral part of the fabric of Nymans in the first half of the C20. Many of her letters were illustrated with sketches (Sambourne Family Archive), and some of her designs for the garden survived the fire in 1947. These include proposals for a Heart Garden, later carried out as the Knot Garden (NA: L/24), plans for the treatment for the new entrance on the east side of the house, a Fishing Hut, and signage, (NA: Box 69 SV/B69/3).

The garden notes of Anne, Countess of Rosse (née Messel) are scattered with sketches (NA: L/11/5), and her influence at Nymans is apparent not just in the tree and shrub planting

from the 1950s but also in the redesign of areas such as the Rose Garden, Rock Garden, and the June Border and Spring Border within the Wall Garden and Top Garden.

Alastair Buchanan, who took over as garden Director from Lady Rosse in 1987, has added various features to the garden including the Topiary and Davidia Grove and the Funerary Garden.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNERS

The Messel family called upon professional architects to design the various phases of the development of the house, but the design of the gardens was largely their own. With the help of their head gardeners, their knowledge of the requirements for the plants, and with their own artistic and design skills within the family, they were able to add areas to the gardens as they were needed. The only professional firm directly involved in the layout was that of James Pulham and Sons, who constructed the rock garden in natural rock, and formed the Mount with the excavated soil. The firm probably did the other landscaping in the area at this date, including the pergola.

Other professionals were also involved but on an informal basis (if they were more formally employed the records were probably destroyed in the fire). William Robinson was a regular guest and is attributed with helping Muriel Messel lay out the herbaceous borders in the Wall Garden in 1904-05, when she would have been 15 years old. Harold Peto was a visitor on four occasions in the 1920s and is attributed with the design of the Loggia in the Sunk Garden, which closely resembles several of his designs. Other guests included many designers as well as gardeners, and informal advice is likely to have been sought and given'.