



47 Denmans Lane  
Lindfield  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH16 2JN

Via planning portal to: SDNP

FAO: Case Officer: Victoria Corrigan

22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2017

**Re Application Number: SDNP/17/01039/FUL. West Ashling Park.**

**Construction of reception/office/tasting room building, five associated holiday lodges**

Dear Sirs,

The Gardens Trust (The GT) - formerly the Garden History Society (GHS) - is a statutory consultee on matters concerning registered parks and gardens, and is now working closely with County Garden Trusts, such as Sussex Gardens Trust (SGT), with regard to commenting on planning applications.

This site is not Registered as a Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest but has been identified and accepted, following local research, as a site of local significance having regard to its history and development as a garden or parkland associated with West Ashling House. The application site and adjoining land adjacent to West Ashling House has a long history in being maintained as pleasure grounds. The feature has been enhanced in recent years by the creation of a landscaped lake and the maintenance of the woodland margins. Although not open to the public or readily visible from adjacent roads the park has a notable character that, in the opinion of the SGT, is worthy of conservation and sympathetic management.

The site is well screened from the surrounding roads by trees and shrub belts and from the applicant's submitted photographs has maintained a 'contained' character with the key landscape features the prominent individual mature trees and strong boundary woodland. The current proposal certainly changes the character of the park by inserting new, dominating, structures into the landscape. Contrary to the response to question 15 on the application form there are effects on the landscape, trees or hedges. This impact of the development is poorly justified in the application with no landscape impact report. The planting of a vineyard may well be a permitted development but well designed it could in itself become a landscape feature within the park and enhance the setting of the house. This opportunity has been missed with a

utilitarian vineyard layout. A comprehensive assessment of the landscape may well have influenced an improvement to this matter.

The built development relates to the provision of an access road, a working/exhibition reception building and a number of rentable lodges. Subject to the route of the road avoiding disturbance to significant trees and undergrowth that probably could be satisfactorily routed. The position, layout and nature of the proposed buildings however greatly affect the visual aspect of the western side of the park. They are of a basic style neither respecting nor adding architecturally anything to their environment. Their positions have no regard to the landscape features, trees, ponds or vistas. Most of the structures are sited well in front of the trees so would be dominant in the views across the park from east and south. There are no attempts to mitigate their impact. The positioning of the lodges appears purely to give those inside a view across the proposed vineyard. Although the development is not likely to be seen from outside the parkland boundary screening can change through natural causes and good design should respect its setting which this scheme does not. SGT feel that if the principal of the development on this site is found to be acceptable a far more sympathetic layout and attractive designs should be possible.

The SGT would wish to enter an objection to the proposal on these grounds.

Yours faithfully

Jim Stockwell.

On behalf of the Sussex Garden Trust.

CC: The Gardens Trust