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**Wealden District Council,
Head of Planning and Building Control,
Council Offices,
Vicarage Lane,
Hailsham,
BN27 2AX**

14th January, 2019

Attn: Ms K Rawlins

Dear Madam,

Planning Application WD/2018/2298/F. **Replacement of existing dwelling (mobile home) and equestrian buildings with a new dwelling of exceptional quality (para 79 house), and landscape enhancements etc and associated works.**

The Gardens Trust (GT) is the statutory consultee on matters concerning registered parks and gardens, and is now working closely with County Garden Trusts such as Sussex Gardens Trust (SGT) regarding commenting on planning policy and planning applications. Representatives of SGT have read the submitted plans and supporting documents with care and our comments are shown below.

Background

Almost the whole of the site sits within the boundary of Kidbrooke Park which is included on Historic England (HE) Register of Historic Parks and Gardens; the site has a Grade II designation and additionally is included on the **HE Heritage At Risk Register** see <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/26114>.

Comments

(i) Demolition of existing and construction of a new dwelling, garages, and stables

Nearly all of the new structures are to be built in the western part of the registered area close to Priory Road. The open ground to the immediate E and SE (which lies on the WNW boundary of the registered area) comprises a rounded ridge (referred to in the register text on the National Heritage List as the central ridge), the crest of which cuts off any views from the house, gardens and immediate designed parkland to this WNW boundary.

The key/significant views from the main designed part of Kidbrooke Park are to the south and south-east, although these too are now mostly truncated by C20 tree cover. Consequently, from the point of view of impact on the significant views and character of the registered area, the proposed development would probably be minimal. The Trust therefore raises no objection to the proposed new buildings and welcomes the proposed tidying up and/or removal of unsightly modern features.

(ii) Conservation, restoration and enhancement of the landscape

The Trust very much welcomes the vision to restore this landscape which is associated with Humphry Repton.

However, the section of the documents that deal with historic aspects of the Landscape fail to describe adequately the extensive evidence of Repton's work at Kidbrooke, and the use of the word 'rumour' to suggest it was a Repton Landscape is misleading.

While we agree that there is no known evidence that Repton worked on the north-west side of the ridge separating the pleasure grounds of Kidbrooke House from the land beyond (where the new house is to be built), it is generally accepted by experts that Repton's designs for the Kid stream were carried out – there is both archival and ground-based field evidence. There is archival evidence for the ridge itself which forms the backdrop to the setting and pleasure grounds of the house – see images below after Repton had advised, showing significant planting along the spine of the ridge.



Figure 15. House from NNE, James Bourne, LEWSA VR:4827/5

It would seem logical to ensure that any repair and new design work on the Tyle brook with its 'Lovers Walk' should reference that on the Kid. The comment in the application '*When the estate was whole it would have been possible to walk from Kidbrooke Park through to Lovers' Walk (red path), up to the Ashdown Forest and then back to the Park via the more formal watercourses laid out in the gardens (blue path)*' supports the likelihood of the Tyle being a feature that Repton worked on. The Trust suggests the case for these proposals in this sensitive landscape would be strengthened if the application demonstrated a greater understanding of the whole of Kidbrooke's landscape development and especially of the features that are likely to have been Repton's work.

Additional information is shown in a recent book published in Nov 2018 by the Sussex Gardens Trust, "Humphry Repton in Sussex", which includes an detailed article on Kidbrooke Park (pages 66-76) – ref ISBN 978-1-5272-3341-6 available from information@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk .

Nevertheless the idea "*...to create a series of exciting surprises that are slowly revealed as the full grandeur of the landscape is uncovered*", as described in the Design and Access Statement (para 2.20), is entirely in keeping with Repton's style.

Summary

SGT has no objection to the proposed new structures and very much welcomes the proposals for the landscape. However, the SGT considers the case for the application in this sensitive landscape would be strengthened if it demonstrated a greater understanding of the whole of Kidbrooke's landscape development and especially of the features that are likely to have been Repton's work.

Yours faithfully

Jim Stockwell

For and on behalf of Sussex Gardens Trust

Copied to

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Historic England (Kay.Richardson@HistoricEngland)