



47 Denmans Lane  
Lindfield  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH16 2JN  
(Sussex Gardens Trust registered address)

Planning Support Team  
SDNPA (Adur and Worthing District)  
**Submitted by e-mail**

22 March 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

**SDNP/19/00706/FUL Creation of a new Visitor Centre, entrance approach, pathway network and extension of glasshouse in addition to minor alterations to staff compound. | Highdown Gardens Highdown Rise Goring-By-Sea Worthing BN12 6FB**

Thank you for consulting both the Gardens Trust and the Sussex Gardens Trust (SGT) on the above proposed development. Our interest is its effect on Highdown's designed historic landscape as the Garden is included on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens with a grade II\* designation.

Two SGT Council members, including myself, visited Highdown on 13 December 2018 and met with the garden manager and head gardener. The views SGT expresses in this letter are based on the documents submitted with the application, the site visit and information from discussion with the 2 members of staff.

SGT is content with the principles of the scheme and the opportunity it will create for extending and improving public access and of revitalising the garden overall, including the plant collection. However, we are disappointed that the application includes no Heritage Statement. The Design and Access statement states only that "*[Highdown] is home to a National Collection of rare chalk-adapted plants based around the work of Sir Frederick Stern (1884-1967), the eminent gardener, plant collector and horticultural writer of the early 20th Century*" and makes no further reference to it being a significant Edwardian garden, especially in relation to the materials used in, and the functions of, the various historic structures, the historic views and vistas which connect or divide the different character areas of the garden or the design thinking behind the disposition of the tree and shrub collection.

Of particular concern are the raised beds in the Sensory Garden, currently shown as timber constructions (drawing no 8991/P/12/Rev A). Although the associated house dates from the early-mid C19, until the early C20 its garden comprised only 2 small lawns, one on each side of the house (Stern, 'A Chalk Garden'); the majority of the detailed features – the 'cave' framed by a high wall of Horsham stone, the Horsham stone rockery and the Look-out, all date from the Stern era and were designed and built in the Edwardian tradition. We therefore consider it more appropriate for proposed refurbishment to reflect and reinforce that tradition with the appropriate construction materials typical of the period – and of this site – namely brick and stone.

[www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk)

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While there may be a place for timber sleepers elsewhere in the garden we consider that this main axial feature, which the Rose and Sensory gardens occupy, and which are the visual culmination of the approach along the main east/west axial path, should be constructed, as the circular bed is proposed and to reflect the adjacent look-out, in reclaimed bricks. It is, after all, pretty much the only formal feature in an otherwise informal layout. Brick can contribute an equally tactile, textural quality to timber, a desirable requirement for a sensory garden.

We suggest that the applicants prepare a Heritage Statement, with advice from a consultant experienced in historic garden design of the period, which should demonstrate an appropriate depth of understanding of the historic significance and design aspects of Highdown's garden, including those mentioned in paragraph three above, which may then be used to inform the refurbishment of both soft and hard landscape.

Yours faithfully

Virginia Hinze BSc. Dip. LD., Dipl. AA Cons (Historic landscapes, Parks and Gardens)

On behalf of the Sussex Gardens Trust  
CC: The Gardens Trust