Sussex Gardens Trust
Encouraging the protection, conservation and evolution of the local garden heritage

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SDNP
Submitted by e-mail to: planning@southdowns.gov.uk

FAO Jessica Riches

12th April, 2022

Dear Sirs,

Stanmer Park - Disabled parking SDNP/22/01389/FUL

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to proposed development affecting a site listed by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens as per the above application. The Sussex Gardens Trust (SGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites, and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations.

Summary

Representatives of SGT know the site well and have carefully reviewed the documentation submitted. The Trust considers the proposed car park would cause substantial harm to the Significance of the Fountain Garden and the setting of the Grade I listed Stanmer House. Moreover, given the application provides no indication of when or how a permanent solution to provision of disabled parking could be provided, this harm needs to be considered irreversible. SGT therefore objects to the application and, before the application is determined, requests the LPA to ask the applicant what alternative permanent solutions might be possible.

Material Considerations in the Planning Process

The site sits within Stanmer Park which is included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest with a Grade II designation. The inclusion in the Register means the Park is subject to a statutory designation, and has the same weight in policy terms under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as scheduled monuments and listed buildings.

Moreover, the site is located in part of the formal Fountain Garden very close and directly in front of the south wing of Stanmer House, which is a Grade I listed building.

A detailed Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan for Stanmer Park was adopted by BHCC in 2003 (see here) and this should be treated as a material planning consideration.

Significance of Stanmer Park, the Fountain Garden and Stanmer House

Paragraph 128 of the NPPF places an obligation on the applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset and to produce an assessment of the impact of the proposals on that significance.

Stanmer Park is of principal importance to the significance of Stanmer House. From the house the park creates a tranquil outlook over the park with the views to the east and south largely unchanged (see Fig 1).



Drawing of South and East Elevations of the House by Grimm, dated 1787



Fig 1 Stanmer House in late C18 and early C21

To the south, the reception rooms on the ground floor and the rooms on the upper floors look out over the Fountain Garden with distant views across the park to Brighton beyond (see Fig 2).



Fig 2 Aerial view 2009

Assessment of Significance

The Heritage Statement submitted with the application includes a detailed description of the site and its history. However, Sussex Gardens Trust considers the Heritage Statement fails to properly identify the significance of the Fountain Garden

SGT considers the Significance of the Fountain Garden lies in: (i) its illustrative historical value as an example of how an informal 18th century parkland garden evolved in the 19th century into a more formal garden; and (ii) its aesthetic value as a harmonious formal garden in front of a fine example of a formal Georgian house (see Fig 3 below). The structure and main features of this garden remain to this day (see Figs 2 above and 4 below), albeit there has been some degradation to the paths that surround the garden.



Early 20th Century Photographs of the Fountain Garden adjacent to the South Elevation

Fig 3

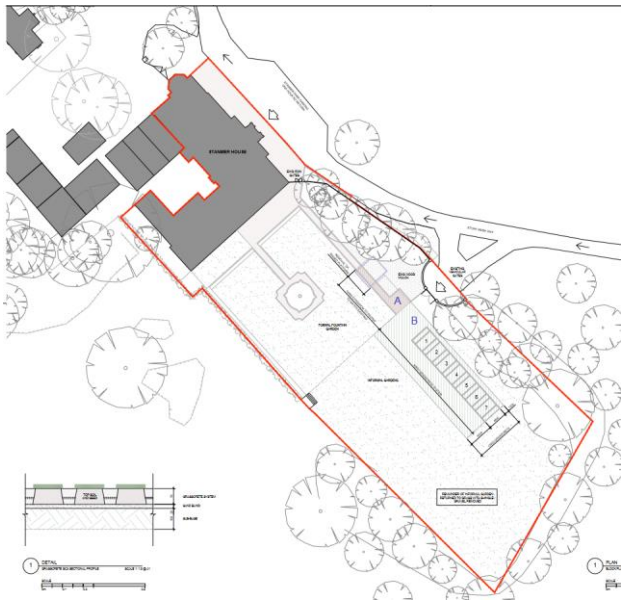


Fig 4 – Proposal included in present planning application

Impact on Significance

The garden area to the south of the house was originally laid out in the 18th century as informal parkland but later in the 19th century this area was remodelled as a more formal Fountain Garden. Fig 3 above shows how the garden looked in the early 20th century

The Heritage Statement includes a cursory assessment of the impact merely stating: "*Though it is considered the creation of a car park has had some impact on the setting of the house, this is temporary and is reversible*"

The significance of the Fountain Garden described earlier would be substantially harmed by the proposed car park due to visual harm – parked cars would be in full view from the Fountain Garden. Views of the Grade I listed house from the park will also be adversely affected as will views from the house to the parkland to the SE. Given no permanent alternative has been identified, this harm should be assessed as permanent.

Restoration Management Plan

The Restoration Management Plan referred to above includes a number of objectives and actions affecting the Fountain Garden and the garden/carpark beyond. Approval of the present application would conflict with several of the objectives included in that Plan:

- Objective 5: To mitigate the adverse impact of the existing C20th developments, where this has been shown to exist. In some instances this may only be achieved through removal.
- Objective 6: To ensure that any mitigation measures that are found to be necessary are in accordance with the character of the C18th design.
- Objective 12: To resist any new development... unless it is demonstrably beneficial to the aesthetic quality of the landscape.
- C9: removal of the shrubbery and cherry orchard... to the south of the house / garden to re-establish the open aspect towards the parkland and reveal views towards Stanmer House.
- C10: the clearance of the conifer screen from the garden boundary ... to reveal visibility between parkland and house.
- SH1: Restore levelled garden to the south of the house.
- SH2: Repair the garden fountain.
- SH4: Remove the C20th garden extension.

Yours faithfully

Jim Stockwell
On behalf of the Sussex Gardens Trust.
CC: The Gardens Trust