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West Sussex
RH16 2JN

Wealden District Council
Send by e-mail to planning@wealden.gov.uk
FAO Mrs S Buckingham

17th March 2023

Dear Sirs,

Re WD/2023/0139/F CREATION OF NEW GARDEN WITHIN SHEFFIELD PARK GARDEN

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.

Sussex Gardens Trust supports the application for the reasons shown below.

Last June representatives of SGT were invited by the National Trust to visit Sheffield Park and discuss the draft proposals on the spot prior to submission of a planning application. We provided comments which were very supportive and included several suggestions for inclusion in the final design (see Annex).

Representatives have now studied the most relevant documents submitted with the present application. In particular three reports: the Heritage Statement; the Concept Presentation; Planning Statement. And several plans: the Stage 2 concept layout; the Landscape plan; the Garden Pavilion details plan; and the proposed bench designs.

We find the latest design to be closely similar to earlier one. The submitted plans include a very useful analysis of the relationship of the garden with the wider grade I landscape such as views in and out, sections and sketches of the proposed character of the planting. We think on the whole, when mature (and a bit 'weathered'), the new benches and shelter should not feel too prominent and urban. We are satisfied therefore that the new garden will not adversely

impinge on the grade I landscape. Moreover, when mature, the new area will add a range and variety of planting in what is at present a rather uninteresting area.

In June 2022 we raised the issue of parking at Sheffield Park during the peak autumn seasons. The new garden will provide interest at different seasons helping to spread the pressure. And the Planning Statement references other suggestions we made at that time, viz booking system during the autumn season and a community bus route. We welcome these measures.

Name of the New Garden

Whilst not a planning issue, we continue to have doubts that the working title of this new garden as simply "Wellbeing Garden". A comment in the Heritage statement states *"the spirit of the garden… under Arthur Gilstrap Soames will be reflected in the innovative use of sub-tropical and non-native species (something that very much characterised Soames' planting from 1910 – 1934)"* . We suggest that the NT could name the garden after Soames.

Kind regards

Jim Stockwell
Trustee, On behalf of Sussex Gardens Trust

Annex

Comments made by Sussex Gardens Trust
following Per-Application site visit in June 2022.

Visitor Operations & Experience Manager
National Trust, Sheffield Park and Garden

19th June 2022

Sheffield Park – New Project

Many thanks for inviting SGT to view the site and discuss the plans on 16th June. Our team much appreciated the opportunity to discuss the project at this formative stage. Here are our observations.

- We were impressed with the care and attention that has been given to the main elements of the project
- We are supportive of the key design elements and like the way in which this area will become a "destination"
- A good process has been followed regarding planning tree/shrub removal and management
- Best practice for root protection appears to be followed
- We support the involvement of community groups
- We support the way in which the new area will extend the seasonality of the garden ie beyond the autumn and spring seasons for which Sheffield park if so well know,
- Like you we have reservations about calling this a "Wellbeing Garden" (that's what their brief calls it) - but we haven't yet come up with any suggestions
- We think the hard elements – surfacing and furniture - should be chosen to avoid creating an urban "feel". Paths in particular contribute a strong element to a site's visual character so we suggest avoiding more formal-looking resin bound surfaces.. Perhaps tarmac with a spray and sandstone chip might be a good choice (although we acknowledge this will require maintenance every few years).
- Regarding furniture, we suggest a theme should be selected and applied consistently; too much variety could destroy the cohesive character which the design clearly seeks to establish
- As you know, like you, we are concerned about parking, particularly since the temporary planning permission for seasonal use of the South Park expires in Dec 2024. You explained that the present project isn't specifically planned to increase visitor numbers, and given the pressure on parking is greatest in the peak seasons, the way this project focusses across all seasons helps to avoid adding to those difficulties. If on reflection you consider there would some increase in visitor numbers, there are positive steps that could be made – in our discussions these were mentioned:
    - Timed ticketing
    - Park and ride
    - Better bus services

We suggest the planning application should address these issues, even if this is not the time to settle on a proper longer-term strategy.

Once again thank you for inviting us and if it would help to discuss at a later stage we would be pleased to help.

Kind regards

Jim Stockwell
Trustee
On behalf of Sussex Gardens Trust