



South Downs Society

Protecting the Beauty of the Downs

Planning Officer
South Downs National Park Authority
South Downs Centre
North Street
Midhurst
West Sussex
GU29 9DH

Tuesday, 23 February 2016

Ref: CD/CDC/54/43

Dear Sirs,

Application: SDNP/15/05030/FUL

Description: Demolition and removal of single storey garden centre buildings and construction of two storey garden centre building.

Location: Maple Ridge Garden Centre and Country Store A272 Trotton West Sussex GU31 5ES

These are the comments of the South Downs Society, the national park society for the South Downs National Park. The Society has nearly 2,000 members and its focus is the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the national park and their quiet enjoyment.

We wish to lodge an **objection** to the proposed application for re-development. The application does not fulfil the primary purpose of the National Park, "To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area" and would be harmful to landscape character, which is contrary to CDC Local Plan (1999) Saved Policies RE1, RE4 and BE11.

While it is recognised that the existing buildings are not ideal or an enhancement to the landscape, the proposed replacement would be more intrusive by the nature of its size, the element of two-storey sections and the fact that the suggested materials are alien to the locality. It is described by the applicant as "a striking natural log structure" and is faced with western red cedar. By its nature a building such as this would not lend itself to blending in with or enhancing the local landscape.

The impact on views has not been adequately considered both from the higher areas of Trotton and Iping Common, in which a two storey building will have considerable detrimental effect, or the footpath running east-west to the north of the site from which the proposed new car park, deliveries area and store will be clearly visible.

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The suggested screening planting will damage open views and itself be an alien intrusion into the landscape.

The former garden centre was popular locally but the car park was rarely full and the proposed significant increase in car parking space will inevitably destroy habitat and be an unsightly intrusion in the landscape in a situation which is directly opposite an area of common land with an SSSI designation.

It is noted that accommodation for staff is included in the plans and if this is to gain permission then strict rules should be attached to ensure in perpetuity that only bona fide employees would be allowed to live there, to limit the possibility of future change of use to general or holiday letting.

Yours faithfully

Steve Ankers
Policy Officer