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**campus**

**Creating**

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**Sussex Lawns Public Art**  
Expression of Interest

**US**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX

**g** grant  
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Historic site photograph from Design Access Statement - Courtesy Feild & CleggBradleyStudio

# Background - Sir Basil Spence

## University Creation & Development

Sir Basil Spence (1907–1976), one of the most distinguished Modern architects of the post-war era, was tasked with designing the University of Sussex, the first of a new generation of universities.

Described by Sir Basil Spence as the “Wonderful Valley” the site has a unique and beautiful character, and he invited the landscape architect Dame Sylvia Crowe to join his team to work with the existing character of the valley.

Situated at the edge of the chalk outcroppings of the scenic South Downs National Park, Spence was “humbled by this superb and beautiful site”.

Spence’s original masterplan was a scheme of low buildings that allowed the banks of trees to form the skyline and was deeply respectful of its rural setting and maintained its downland character. His proposal retained much of the established vegetation, areas of woodland and field boundaries. This gives the Campus its unique character of buildings set within and relating well to a managed and mature parkland setting.

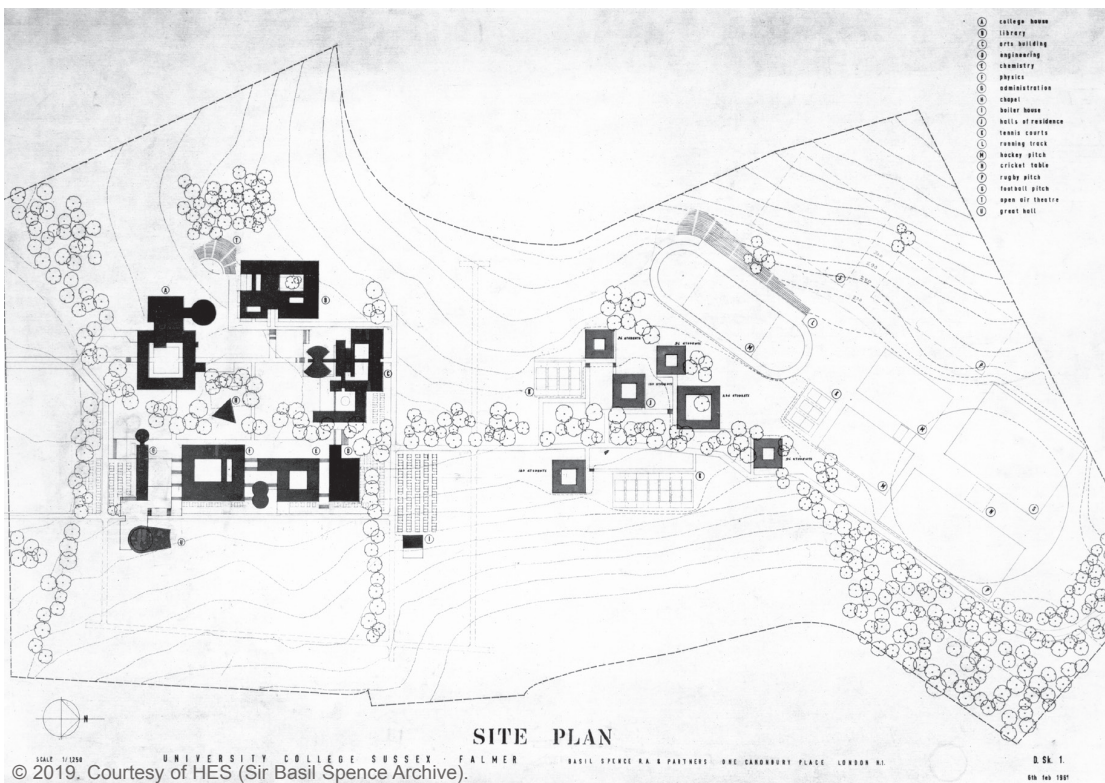
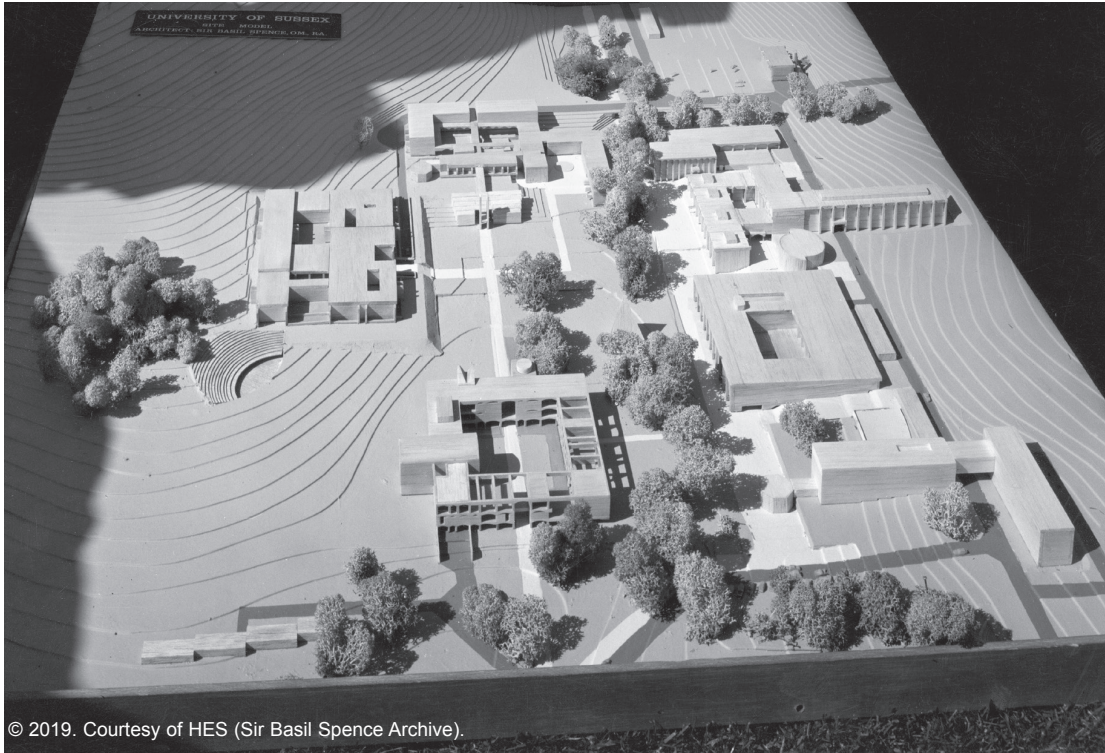
Spence’s modernist vision for a University, fit for a brave new world, required a bold, innovative concept but the architect was also sensitive to the beauty of the Downland

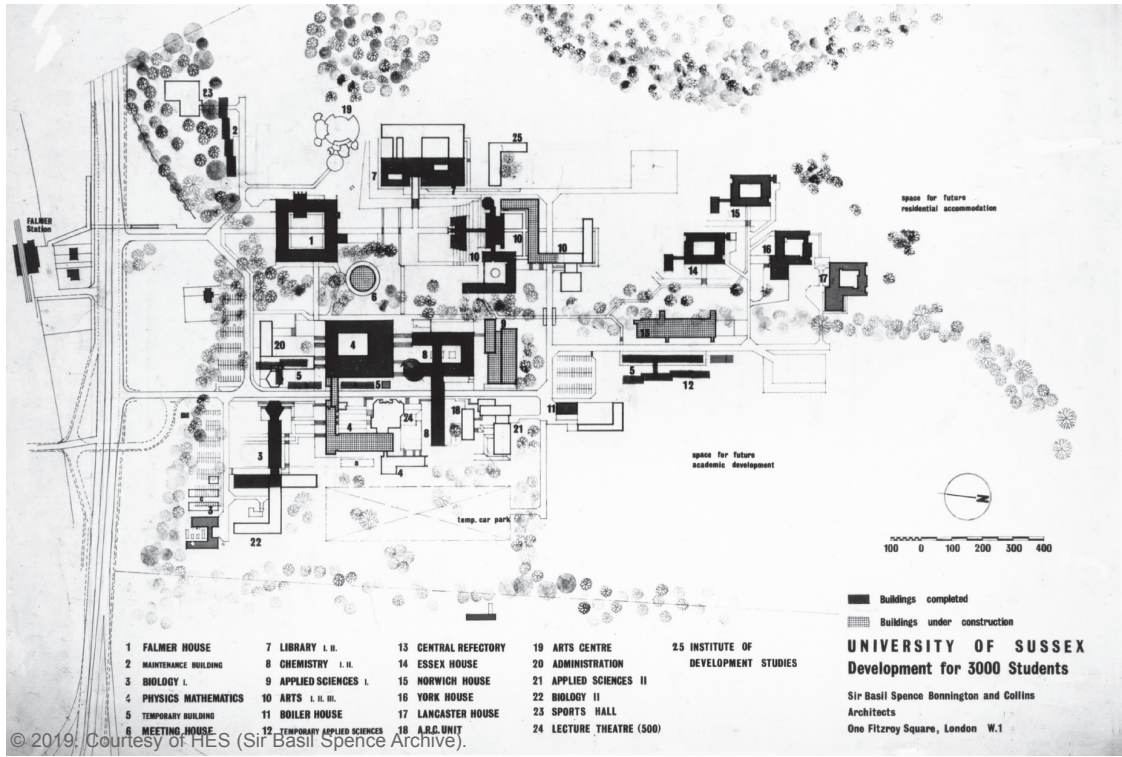
When writing about the creation of the University in 1961, founding architect Sir Basil Spence once said “*the whole precinct should have the ‘sense of a University’ and should, if possible, grow out of the soil of Sussex to become a natural part of this beautiful site*”.

His vision of Sussex was one where the Campus would develop in sensitivity with the landscape, preserving mature trees

setting and the value of local, traditional building materials. Spence’s use of traditional Sussex flint walling was most inspired by a ruined, charming old barn on the rural 232-acre site, which was known as Forty Acre Tenant Laine before the construction of the University began. The barn had wood-boarded walls, flint and red-brick gables and a tiled roof. All these local Sussex materials inspired Spence’s use of dark flint, pale concrete, woodgrain patterning, rich red brick and large plate-glass windows in the architecture of Falmer House, the first building he designed for the new University from 1959-62.

Eight of the 17 buildings which Basil Spence and Partners were commissioned to design have been listed (seven at grade II\* and Falmer House at grade I).









# Background - Dame Sylvia Crowe

## University Creation & Development

Dame Sylvia Crowe (1901–1997) was a pioneering British landscape architect and town planner, renowned for her significant contributions to the field of landscape architecture in the 20th century. Her innovative and thoughtful designs have left an indelible mark on the landscape, enriching the environments in which people live, work, and play.

Crowe's work was characterised by a meticulous attention to detail, a deep respect for the natural environment, and a commitment to creating spaces that fostered a sense of community.

Her legacy at the University is strong, but generally silent, existing in the spine of trees that cut across the centre of Campus, the cloisters, courtyards, and pathways that give context to our teaching spaces. Crowe, the University's original landscape architect, still choreographs us through our Campus, yet most of us are completely unaware of her.

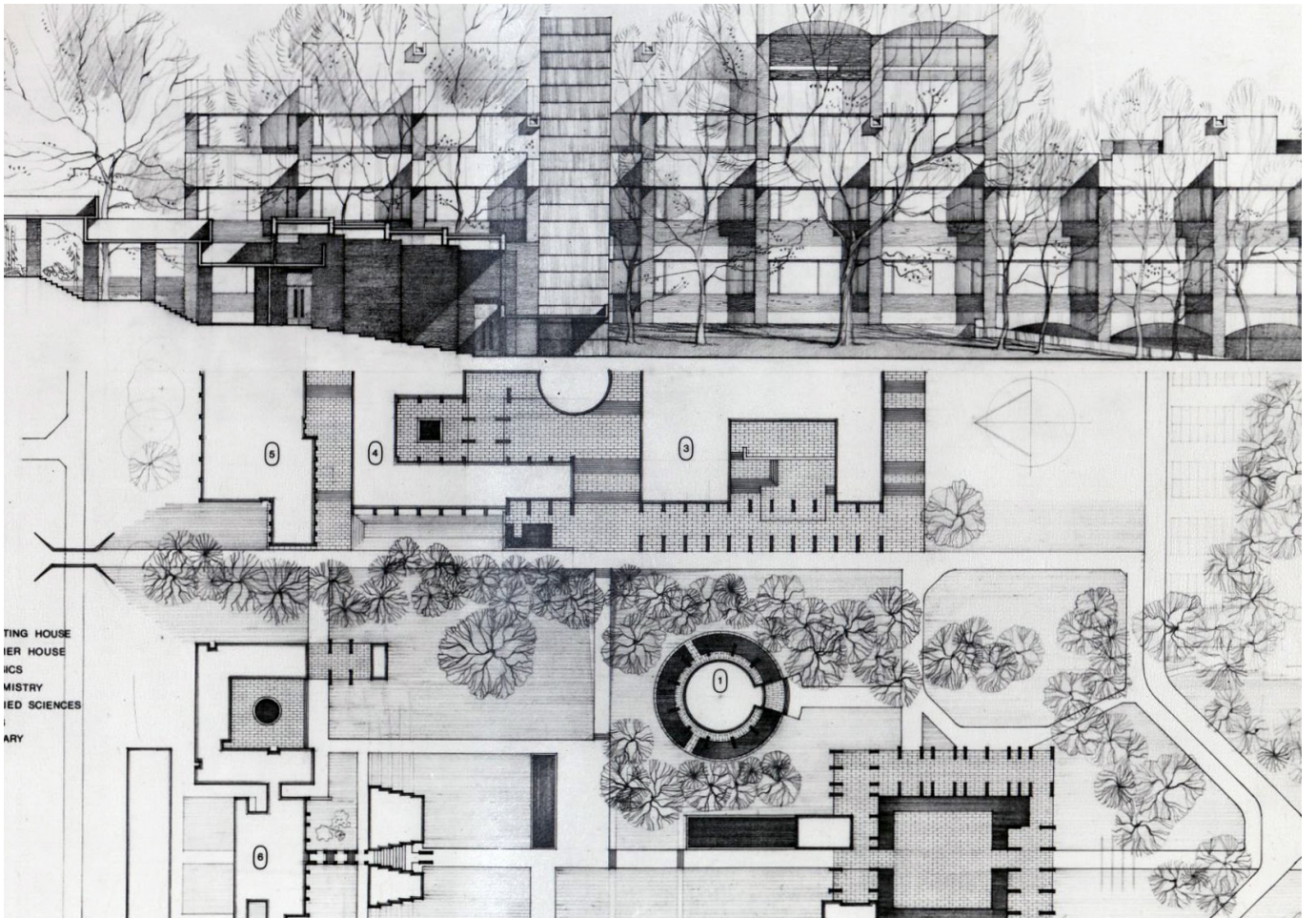
The relationship with the landscape and the influence by Sylvia Crowe is evident in the clear sightlines, walkways and strong axial composition of the buildings, opening out onto the landscape of the South Downs National Park beyond.

Spence echoes Crowe in his chapter on the building of the Sussex Campus. He writes: *'Because of the lovely site I was against building high; the trees should top the buildings and continue to form the skyline. The materials should be sympathetic to the location – a Sussex brick, concrete, knapped flint, copper, timber and white paint'*

The original tree lines were maintained, with mature trees running north-south through the centre of the Campus. Spence carefully manipulated building forms and positions to create unfolding views, and “enticing glimpses” of the landscape beyond.

The space between buildings on the Campus is as important as the buildings themselves. The masterplan sought to move away from the traditional collegiate Oxbridge model, instead focusing on the social and cultural aspects of student life, reflected in the informal relationship of the buildings.

Crowe's legacy at Sussex, and in her landscape designs in general, can be defined as sympathetic. In 1955 she wrote that *'Every landscape has its own character which reacts differently to the incursion of crowds and buildings.'* The architect must 'design in sympathy with each particular landscape (Crowe, 1955, 250).



Site Plan and Elevation (Date unknown) from Design Access Statement - Courtesy FeildenCleggBradleyStudio





Artwork example - Sculpture by Artist Plensa in Rice Campus



Artwork example - Parked Bench, Southwark, London



Artwork example - University of Sheffield



Artwork example - Please Be Seated, Chengdu



Artwork example - Polymorphic Bench, Columbia University

# Vision Statement

Artwork to offer a place for staff, students, visitors and members of the public to socialise, work, rest and share ideas.

## The Brief

The artist's commission will be in the region of £60K- £70K inclusive of VAT to include the production and engagement requirements of the Public Art:

The Public Artwork should:

- be a permanent piece of artwork for a minimum of 50 years integrated into the fabric of the landscape and public realm of Sussex Lawns and the wider Campus.
- be of an appropriate scale.
- be a buildable proposal that is sustainable, affordable and practical to build and maintain within the chosen location and within the programme and delivery constraints.
- become an exemplary and progressive piece of work for the University of Sussex.
- there could be an element of the project that is interactive and engages the local community.
- be aligned to other materials used in Sussex Lawns and have a life span of minimum 25-50 years.
- enhance wellbeing and accessibility.
- create a sense of place, a destination.
- carefully consider planting, seating & lighting.

## Submission Requirements

We invite expressions of interest from artists with experience in Public Art, particularly those who can demonstrate an understanding of the University's ethos and its relationship with Sussex's cultural and natural heritage.

Interested artists should provide:

- A brief statement outlining their artistic approach and interest in the project.
- A current CV, including relevant experience in Public Art commissions.
- Up to five relevant examples of previous work, demonstrating creativity and impact.
- Any personal or professional connection to the University of Sussex or the wider Sussex region.
- Submissions should be sent to Better Campus ([betterCampus@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:betterCampus@sussex.ac.uk)) by 8th April 2025. We look forward to reviewing your proposals and exploring how Public Art can enrich the University's environment of Sussex Lawns.
- A shortlist of up to 5 artists will be invited to submit a design approach and present to the University team.
- The shortlisted artists will receive a fund of £600 (per artist) to assist with their submission.
- The shortlisted artists work will be exhibited in the University campus for 2 weeks.

# Artwork Themes

The proposed artwork should create an opportunity for enhancing the quality of the public realm and celebrating history of the Campus. The potential themes identified include:

- Local cultural and natural history of the site
- Wellness - Connecting People with Nature
- Botanical / biodiversity references – particular to the University of Sussex and the South Downs National Park and surrounding areas
- The use of local, traditional materials and crafts from Sussex
- Sir Basil Spence or Dame Sylvia Crowe – the original architect and landscape architect for the Campus
- The circular economy and materials to reduce embodied carbon emissions/waste; use of carbon-positive materials; the incorporation of biodiversity into the works - reflecting an innovative use of materials and processes.

## **Potential opportunities and locations:**

The following is a list of areas where we see that Public Art could be incorporated into the public realm.

- Table Planters - bespoke furniture with planting
- Street furniture
- A deliverable colour palette strategy for the street furniture and metal work elements
- Seating and benches – fixed or loose
- Lighting

The chosen artist will be required to:

- Provide a narrative for how the artwork integrates into the landscape and public realm design.

# Role and Responsibilities

- Develop the concept design in consultation with the design team and the stakeholders. The artwork will need to be approved by the University committee and the Council.
- Commission other works for the realisation and installation of the artwork, e.g. photographers, poets, silversmiths, etc.
- Work with the University of Sussex to deliver the Public Art on time aligned with the construction programme and within budget.

# Programme

The chosen artist will work with the Client Group, Grant Associates and the Contractor to develop an initial concept and then work with the Project Team to take the project through manufacture to completion. The project is therefore split into two stages and the artist shall be remunerated for each stage of work separately:

## Stage 1: Design Concept

The appointed artist will undertake research and produce a document outlining their design proposal. The design and process for manufacture will be approved by the Project Team before going onto Stage 2.

## Stage 2: Manufacture and Installation

The artist will undertake manufacture and/or where appropriate, oversee the production of the various elements of the project. This will entail the procurement and installation of the artwork. According to the current programme Stage 2 is due to take place in Summer 2028.

# Timescales

Expression of Interest Issued	24th March 2025
Deadline to receive Expression of Interest	8th April 2025
Review of long list	9th to 11th April 2025
Inform short list	11th April 2025
On Campus UoS/Grants presentation & issue full brief	11th April 2025
Payment to support the submission	11th April 2025
Deadline to receive presentation and submission	9th May 2025
Short list exhibition in Library including survey	12th to 28th May 2025
Panel to review all submissions	June 2025
Appoint successful artist	June/ July 2025



# Audience

Located close by the Health and Wellbeing Centre, a new supermarket, cafe and the existing Student Centre - Hub for students services, we expect the following audience groups to interact with the Public Art,

- Students
- Staff
- Alumni
- Members of the local community in Falmer, Moulsecoomb
- GP patients
- Summer school students
- Visitors to Campus including potential new students and their families

Please outline how your work will contribute to the experience of these audiences in this space and how it can become a destination in its own right.

# Connection to Sussex

The University and its Campus has been deeply embedded within the landscape and communities of Sussex for over 60 years. We especially welcome applications from student and staff alumni who have been part of the University of Sussex community, or from people who have a strong connection with Brighton and the Sussex region and the South Downs landscape and community.

- Please outline any connections that you have to the University of Sussex or the communities and landscape that it sits within.
- How will these connections influence your practice and approach during this project?

# Experience

Previous experience in Public Art and external installations is desirable.

- Please outline examples of projects in which you have worked on
  - External installations
  - Use of different materials
  - Engaging with audiences and communities as part of a project

# The Team

The artist will be part of a team including

- Landscape architects
- University of Sussex – Students, staff & visitors
- B&HCC
- The Public

This role will need to include consultation, engagement & events which will input to the design process.



# Context

## Masterplans & Campus

### **East Slope**

The East Slope Development recently delivered provides a mixture of three to six storey cluster flats and three to four storey town houses. The experience of students living in the accommodation is enhanced through the mixed-use facility that includes a student services hub and retail spaces.

### **West Slope Development (currently under construction)**

The West Slope residential development for the University is part of the continuing evolution of the Campus to improve the University's facilities, ensure the best possible student experience and continue the architectural and design legacy of Sir Basil Spence and Dame Sylvia Crowe.

With the Sussex Lawns at its heart, the West slope provides three typologies of student rooms together with supporting student amenities: student hubs, launderettes, a supermarket, health and wellbeing centre and a cafe.

The scheme retains the character of the existing parkland setting and the student clusters and townhouses propose an integrated architectural and landscape design. It is respectful of the existing mature trees and creates garden terraces around these trees for the smaller neighbourhood clusters of residences to use, occupy, and claim as part of their identity.

Site considerations include:

- Located in the centre of Campus
- Adjacent to South Downs National Park
- Significant number of existing mature trees to be retained
- Key focus on accessibility and sustainability

Key:

1. Large open lawn areas establish parkland character in Sussex Lawn
2. Existing mature trees retained
3. Proposed semi-mature tree planting to re-establish historic 'Green Core'
4. Flexible lawn for temporary / seasonal events
5. Spill-out space to the cafe
6. Direct relationship to the new Student Centre to the east
7. M+E substation sensitively integrated into the landscape
8. Garden court with planted beds and flexible use hard space and seating
9. Basketball half-court
10. Existing woodland copse retained
11. Lift and bridge access
12. Plaza and seating
13. Open lawn - space for library building to be built later

# West Slope Masterplan

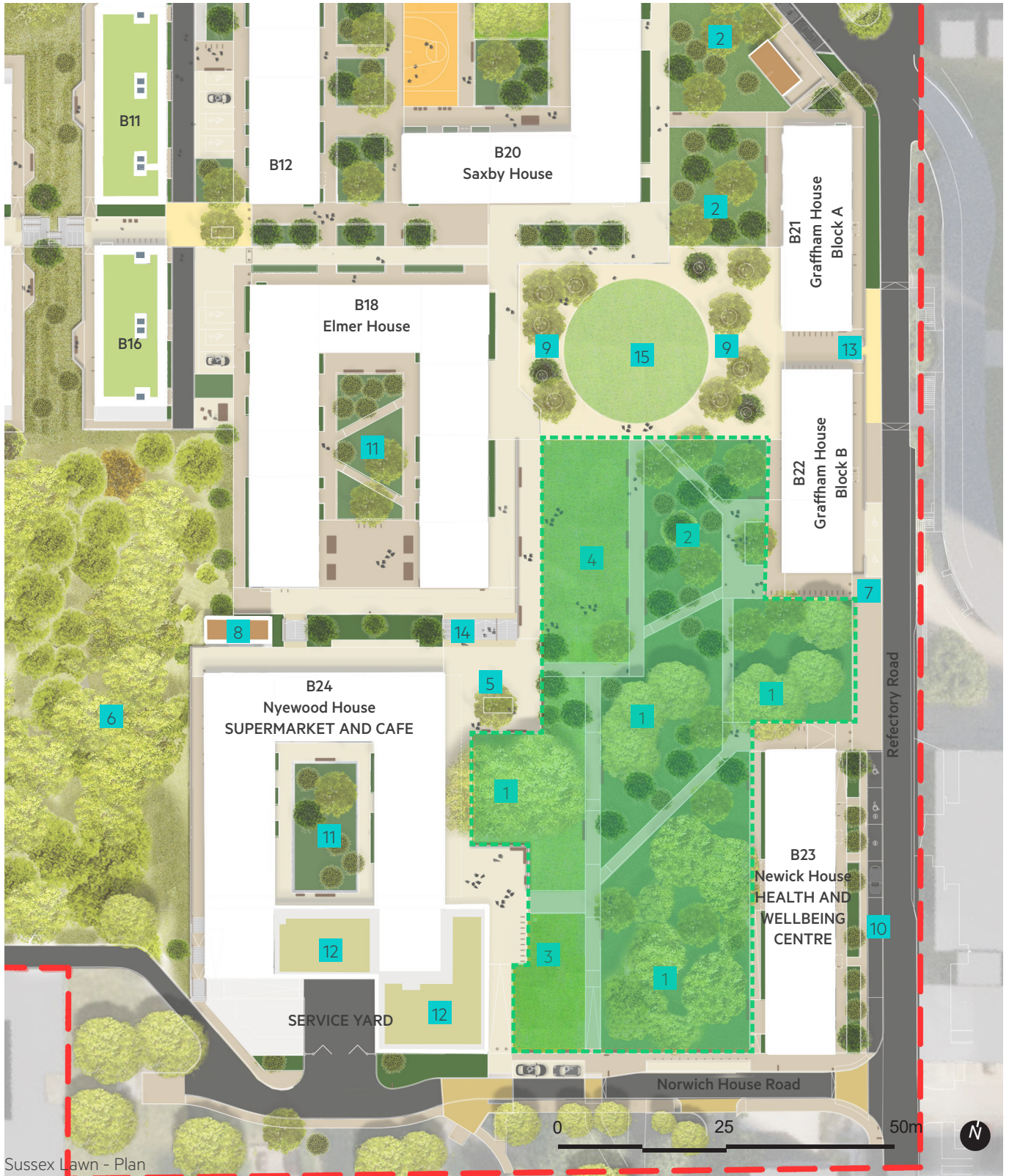


Landscape Masterplan

#### Sussex Lawns - Key

1. Existing mature trees retained where possible.
2. Proposed semi-mature tree planting to re-establish the historic 'Green Core'.
3. Large open grass lawn areas establish parkland character within North Court.
4. Larger flexible open space to the northern end for temporary / seasonal events (pop-up power and water provision required in proximity).
5. Spill-out space to cafe.
6. Existing woodland copse retained.
7. Direct relationship to the new Student Centre to the east.
8. M+E substation with sedum roof
9. Plaza and seating
10. Health and Wellbeing Centre parking.
11. Rain garden courts with flexible hard paved areas and seating
12. Extensive green roof to B24
13. Sepped access to east slope
14. Stepped access to B18
15. Open lawn - space for library to be built later

# Sussex Lawns



Sussex Lawn - Plan





View looking north towards Sussex Lawns



View looking west from Refectory Road

