



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2024

by J Reid BA(Hons) BArch(Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/W/24/3337836

**Sussex Heritage Centre, Sefton Place, Warningcamp, West Sussex
BN18 9QY**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Dominic Patrick Whitehouse of Sussex Heritage Centre against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/23/02269/FUL.
 - The development proposed is Erection of new structure on site.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect that the proposed development would have on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, which is within the South Downs National Park.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is situated within the National Park, which has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The first purpose of the National Park is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
4. The roughly square-plan site is situated about a mile from Arundel on the roughly north east and south west sides of a private lane, which ends near the site's south east boundary. The site includes the substantial historic building at Sefton Place, which includes the existing tourist accommodation, in the roughly east part of the site. The roughly north and south parts of the site are mainly grassed, and the roughly west part includes a mostly hard surfaced parking and turning area, which is reached from the lane. The site is partly edged by vegetation and adjoins mainly open fields to roughly north east and south west, the grounds of Sefton Paddock to roughly south east, and the grounds of Bethany to roughly north west.
5. The surrounding countryside is mainly characterised by open fields partly bounded by hedgerows, with occasional trees and woodland blocks, and the River Arun winding through its floodplain nearby to roughly west. So, the locality has a rural character and mainly verdant appearance. Whilst the rural hamlet includes a scatter of dwellings and other buildings in a range of ages and styles, which are mostly clustered close to the lane, the handsome form

- and features of the building at Sefton Place, and the openness in its grounds, make a positive contribution to the sense of place.
6. The proposed accommodation for the existing business would be included in a separate mostly 2 storey barn-hipped roofed building in the west part of the site. The building would include 3 ground floor bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, which are said to be suitable for visitors with mobility issues, and a single garage with a store. The proposal's upper floor, which would be partly within its roof space, would include 2 shared activity rooms, an office and another store.
 7. However, due to its scale, bulk, domestic features and discordant character, the proposal would look more like a new dwelling than, say, an outbuilding or annex for Sefton Place. For the same reasons, and as most of the land around the proposed building would be hard surfaced, the proposal would have an unacceptably built-up character and appearance. Moreover, as the proposal and cars parked on its extensive hard surfaces would be sited close to the existing building, they would harmfully erode the important openness within the grounds of the building at Sefton Place. So, the proposal would diminish the positive contribution of Sefton Place to the National Park's cultural heritage.
 8. Whilst the number of car and cycle parking spaces for the existing and proposed developments would be broadly in line with the Authority's standards, there would be insufficient room for cars to manoeuvre into and out of most parking spaces, and the garage would be undersized. As an acceptable parking scheme would be likely to take up more of the existing building's grounds, to the detriment of the local landscape character, its details could not reasonably be dealt with by conditions, including those to which the appellant has agreed.
 9. As there is little evidence to show that the health, longevity and landscape value of the existing trees and hedgerows on or near the site would not be adversely affected during or after construction, the proposal could diminish their rural character and mostly verdant appearance. So, whilst the proposal would broadly respect the scale and siting of the dwellings to roughly north west, it would be incongruous within the grounds of the existing building at Sefton Place, and at odds with the surrounding landscape. As few details of the tourist accommodation at The Hollies has been put to me, and as the outbuilding at Sefton Cottage respects that dwelling's character and siting, these other developments provide little support for this damaging scheme.
 10. Therefore, I consider that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and that it would fail to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park. It would be contrary to Policy SD1 of the South Downs Local Plan (LP) which seeks sustainable development, LP Policy SD4 which aims to conserve and enhance landscape character, LP Policy SD5 which seeks high quality design and respect for context, LP Policy SD11 which aims to conserve and enhance trees and hedgerows, LP Policy SD22 which seeks an appropriate level of parking, LP Policy SD23 which seeks sustainable tourism, LP Policy SD25 which aims to conserve and enhance the National Park's special qualities, guidance in the South Downs National Park Adopted Design Guide and Parking Supplementary Planning Documents, and the first purpose of the National Park. It would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) which aims to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

Conclusion

11. I have found that the proposed development would be contrary to the Development Plan when taken as a whole. The other considerations in this case, including the Framework, do not outweigh that conflict.
12. For the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Reid

INSPECTOR