
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 May 2025

by **N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/24/3353748

The Mill House, Halfway Bridge, Lodsworth, West Sussex, GU28 9BP

- 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 Gilchrist against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/24/01729/HOUS.
 - The development proposed is described as a 2 storey garage on former garage (now demolished) with 2 garage spaces and 1 car port. A new loft space for home studio with dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a 2 storey garage on former garage (now demolished) with 2 garage spaces and 1 car port. A new loft space for home studio with dormers at The Mill House, Halfway Bridge, Lodsworth, West Sussex GU28 9BP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref SDNP/24/01729/HOUS, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site lies within the South Downs National Park which benefits from inspirational and varied landscapes, internationally important wildlife, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant market towns and villages. The statutory purposes of National Parks are to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of those areas by the public.
3. Section 11A of The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended) now includes the duty on relevant authorities that they must seek to further the purposes when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in any National Park.
4. Furthermore, the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site sits within a pocket of buildings which include the Halfway Bridge Inn, a Grade II listed public house and a more modern commercial building. The appeal site itself includes a detached dwelling ("the host building") which sits on a split-level site.
7. The host building and its associated garden areas are elevated considerably above the adjoining access and a retaining wall surrounds a large part of the appeal site. The vehicular access into the site is to lower land with the current parking forecourt (and now demolished previous garage) also sited on lower land.
8. It is proposed to erect a detached double garage with carport and store at the end of the driveway and to the corner of the appeal site. The proposed garage would be sited in a similar location to the previous garage and would incorporate a gable ended pitched roof and two modest dormer windows. The loft space would be used as a home studio and would be accessed by an external staircase.
9. The proposed development would not intrude on the higher land which incorporates the garden areas and the host building. But it would be greater in footprint and scale than the now demolished earlier garage. However, it would be well separated and sited on considerably lower land than the host building.
10. The change in levels with the proposed garage on lower land below the host building would ensure that when viewed in context, its height would be experienced as a sympathetic and subordinate structure. While I accept the garage would also be generous in footprint, the proposed separation in combination with the change in levels is important as this creates visual space and relief between the buildings. This is of value as it would avoid an isolated building while maintaining an ancillary relationship with the host building and sympathetically blending with the wider pocket of buildings.
11. There would be some visibility above the existing fence of the proposed roof when viewed from the A272 and Halfway Bridge Inn car park. However, this would broadly be the upper elements of the proposal which pitch away from this boundary up to the ridge. Additionally, this view would be softened and diffused by the existing green landscaping to the boundary with additional landscaping also proposed to bolster screening, connect with the wider landscape, enhance green infrastructure and provide opportunities for wildlife.
12. Given the ground level and location of the proposed development within the site, the impact from any other vantage point would be limited. The appellant confirms that local materials are proposed which would complement and enhance the surrounding environment. The agreement of these materials can be secured via condition to ensure the development would contribute toward local distinctiveness and integrate successfully within the surrounding environs.
13. Tying all these factors together, the proposed development would conserve the landscape character and visual integrity of the area. It would not be intrusive and would be acceptable both in relation to the host building and when viewed within its wider context. Measures are also proposed which would complement soft landscaping and wildlife, these factors can be controlled via planning conditions.

14. The proposed development would therefore have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore comply with the relevant provisions of Policies SD1, SD5, SD6, SD7 and SD31 of the South Downs National Park Local Plan 2019. These, amongst other things, address the need for high quality design therefore respecting local identity, quality, and sense of place.

Other Matters

15. The Halfway Bridge Inn is a Grade II Listed Building circa 18th century with architectural detailing of its time such as headers with dressings, quoins, and casement windows. The Authority did not raise objection in respect to the impact of the proposed development on the Listed Building. Considering the scale and size of the proposed development, ground levels and its limited visual impact in this respect, along with the separation from the listed building and the presence of another building in between. I would also agree with the Authority that the setting and significance of the listed building would not be unacceptably harmed.

Conditions

16. The Authority has suggested conditions which I have considered and where necessary amended in line with national policy and guidance. In the interest of certainty, conditions specifying time, and the approved plans are needed.
17. The details of materials, external lighting, and roof lights are also necessary to ensure the proposed development integrates into the locality including the South Downs International Dark Night Skies Reserve. Finally, conditions to secure habitat enhancements and compliance with the submitted Ecosystems Services Statement are also required.
18. I have not imposed a condition to restrict the use of the proposed development as this matter is already adequately controlled under Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Even if it were not, the Authority has not robustly shown why alternative uses which may be possible without planning permission would be harmful.
19. Finally, and in the interests of natural beauty and wildlife, I have added a landscape condition.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons, having regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant considerations, the appeal is allowed subject to the conditions listed in the attached schedule.

N Praine

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions (9 in total)

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) No development above ground level shall take place until details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and samples.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawings: Location Plan, Site Plan, Tree Plan, PL01, PL02, PL03 and PL04.
- 4) Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of external lighting shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and thereby retained as such.
- 5) Notwithstanding any details submitted or any indication on the approved plans prior to the installation of the roof lights hereby permitted full details of the roof lights shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The roof lights shall be conservation type roof lights and the details shall include plans and sections of the proposed roof lights showing their position within the roof frame and details of the proposed materials and finishes. Thereafter the development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details and once installed the roof lights shall be retained as approved.
- 6) The roof lights hereby approved shall be fitted with automatic blackout blinds to avoid any upward light spill in accordance with sections 6.3 and 9 of the South Downs National Park Authority's Dark Skies Technical Advice Note (April 2018). Once installed the roof blinds shall be maintained in working order and retained as such.
- 7) Before the development hereby permitted is brought into use details and locations of the following habitat enhancements shall be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be installed/erected within the site within 6 months of the implementation of this permission:
 - a) A bat box is installed on the buildings onsite facing south/south westerly positioned 3-5m above ground.
 - b) A hedgehog nesting box should be installed within the site to provide future nesting areas for hedgehogs.
 - c) A bird box to be installed on the building / and or tree within the garden of the property.

Once installed the habitat enhancements shall thereafter be left in perpetuity. Appropriate designs can be found in the publication "Designing for Biodiversity: A technical guide for new and existing buildings".

- 8) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Ecosystems Services Statement and retained thereafter.
- 9) No development shall commence until a scheme of landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, identify those to be retained as well as proposed landscaping to include native planting. Once approved, all planting in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

End of Schedule