



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 14 August 2025

by **A James BSc (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 September 2025

Appeal A: APP/L2250/W/25/3358574

22-26 The Southcliffe Hotel, The Leas, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2DY

- 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 Sandeep Chawla of Mountfair Ltd against the decision of Folkestone and Hythe District Council.
 - The application reference is 24/1043/FH.
 - The development is new roof finishes to front, top, side and rear sections of main roof and proposed repair/replacement to all pitched and flat roof dormers.
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Appeal B: APP/L2250/Y/25/3358577

22-26 The Southcliffe Hotel, The Leas, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2DY

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Sandeep Chawla of Mountfair Ltd against the decision of Folkestone and Hythe District Council.
 - The application reference is 24/1044/FH.
 - The works relate to new roof finishes to front, top, side and rear sections of main roof and proposed repair/replacement to all pitched and flat roof dormers.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. As the appeal site lies within a conservation area and relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

4. The main issues are whether the appeal scheme would preserve a Grade II listed building, known as 'Hotel Ambassador Southcliff' (Ref: 1344168) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Folkestone Leas and Bayle Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The 'Hotel Ambassador Southcliff' is a Grade II listed building, which dates back to the mid-19th century. It is four storeys high with attic and basement and

constructed in a classical style. It is finished with white stucco. The upper ground floor is rusticated, with canted bay windows and entrance doorways. The building has a mansard roof, which is set behind a parapet and features a number of pedimented dormers. At the time the building was listed, the building had a slate roof; however, it appears from the evidence before me that the slate roof was replaced some time ago with modern materials, without consent. While the listing description concentrates on the front façade, listings are primarily for identification purposes and do not provide an exhaustive or complete description of the special interest.

6. Based on my site visit and the evidence before me, I find that the listed building's special interest insofar as is relevant to these appeals is derived from its historic and architectural interest, as an illustration of mid-19th century architecture. The building's grand stature, its surviving historic fabric and its pleasing architectural style and design make important contributions in these regards.
7. The appeal site lies within the Folkestone Leas and Bayle Conservation Area (CA). The CA includes part of the seafront and the old town. The significance of the CA, insofar as is relevant to these appeals derives from the high quality architecture of differing styles and periods and the public open spaces within it, which signify the town's evolution as a historic seaside resort. The appeal property lies within a prominent position overlooking the seafront and is highly visible from the public realm. The appeal property by reason of its grand scale and architectural design makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA.
8. The appeal scheme seeks to retain the fibre cement tiles, known as 'Swisspearl Westerland' which have been installed on the roof. The appellant advises that the roof tiles replaced a mix of non-original roof tiles, which were in a poor condition and that the appeal scheme has resulted in a more uniformed appearance and not resulted in the loss of historic fabric or original architectural detailing. However, the previous tiles were unauthorised and I therefore give this argument very limited weight in my decision.
9. The fibre cement tiles which have been installed have a textured finish with a dressed edge design that seeks to replicate a traditional slate. However, they have a materially different aesthetic when compared to natural slate. The fibre cement tiles lack the subtle and unique variations in texture and colour that come from the natural geological processes. Furthermore, the fibre cement tiles are not a traditional or authentic material and exhibit artificial characteristics. Accordingly, the fibre cement tiles fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the CA.
10. The appeal scheme also seeks consent to replace the window surrounds with UPVC ogee style architraves and replace some non-original, rather flat, rotten timber detailing with UPVC. The Council advises that the existing UPVC windows and surrounds do not have consent. While the appellant asserts that the appeal scheme helps to improve the visual appearance of the listed building, this is in comparison to unauthorised works. As a result, I give this argument very limited weight in my decision.
11. In this case, I find that the use of UPVC fails to be sympathetic with the historic character of the listed building. Where UPVC is already present on the building, it is clearly distinguishable from more traditional materials due to its shinier and more

uniform finish, particularly when compared to timber. Furthermore, the materials used are not traditional materials and undermine the authenticity and integrity of the listed building. The presence of UPVC on the building already demonstrates the harm that can be caused to the listed building and the CA by such works.

12. The appeal property is highly prominent from the public realm, including from the promenade adjacent to the seafront. The appellant ascertains that the appeal scheme would be indistinguishable at roof level and would have a limited visual impact when viewed from the public realm. Nevertheless, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained. In this case, the fibre cement roof tiles and UPVC detailing are clearly visible from both the public and private realm. The appeal scheme appears highly discordant on this listed building and within the historic environment. As a result, I find that it causes harm to the special interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the CA.
13. I acknowledge that works to the roof were urgently required in order to prevent water ingress and damage to the building fabric during an unseasonally wet period. While the works have prevented the decline of the building, there is no compelling evidence before me that the works were limited to the minimum measures immediately necessary as required under Section 9 (3) of the Act. Furthermore, such works could have been carried out using a more appropriate and traditional material.
14. I appreciate that the previous non-original tiles and UPVC detailing had been installed prior to the appellant taking ownership of the building. Nonetheless, any works that have been carried out since the building was listed, which affect the special architectural and historic interest of the building and do not have the benefit of listed building consent are in contravention of the Act. The Act provides for remedies to such contraventions to be sought from whoever is a current owner, even though those works may have been carried out by previous owners.
15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal scheme fails to preserve the special interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the CA as a whole. I find the harm to the significance of the listed building and CA to be 'less than substantial' and at the lower end of the scale. However, this should not be equated with a less than substantial planning objection and is of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the appeal scheme, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
16. There is a small economic benefit due to the construction works, which I give limited weight as a public benefit. The works have repaired the roof, which has prevented water ingress and the deterioration of the building; helping to safeguard the building for future generations. However, given the harm caused by the materials used, I give this argument limited weight in my decision. There is also no substantive evidence that the appeal scheme is necessary in order to secure the optimum viable use of the asset. As a result, the public benefits carry limited weight in favour of the development and are insufficient to outweigh the great weight afforded to the conservation of heritage assets.

17. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal scheme fails to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building and the character and appearance of the CA. The appeal scheme fails to accord with the requirements of the Act and the historic environment policies of the Framework. Accordingly, I find conflict with Policies HB1 and HB8 of the Folkestone and Hythe District Places and Policies Local Plan, September 2020. These policies among other things require that alterations respect the character of the host building, in terms of materials and detailing and should not result in unacceptable harm to heritage assets.

Other Matters

18. It is clear from the evidence before me that the Council had provided pre-application advice, which was supportive of the appeal scheme. The appellant also made the Council aware that the works were being carried out prior to receiving formal consent in order to ensure the building was watertight. While I sympathise with the appellant on this matter, as the decision maker I am required to determine the appeal scheme and discharge my statutory duties.
19. Following the Council's issue of the decision notice, the appellant sought further advice from the Council. The appellant states that the Council advised that Swisspearl Westerland slate roof tiles would be acceptable and to submit revised applications. While the full circumstances of these other applications are not before me, the Council confirms that these applications have been refused. I therefore give them very limited weight in my decision.
20. I do not find that a condition seeking details of finishes would mitigate the harm that I have identified.
21. I appreciate that one private representation was received in support of these appeals. However, this does not alter my findings set out above.

Conclusion

22. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

A James

INSPECTOR