
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 June 2025

by **O Tresise MSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/25/3358302
323 & 324 High Street, Petworth GU28 0AU

- 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 Oliver Budgen of the Leconfield Estate against the decision of the South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/24/01698/HOUS.
 - The proposed development is described as: 'Enlarge current pedestrian opening and remove banked earth to create new parking for 323 and 324 High Street'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including the Petworth Conservation Area (PCA) and the setting of the listed buildings, known as 347 Leconfield and Quoinstones.

Reasons

3. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Additionally, Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires me, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
4. The appeal site stands within the PCA at the centre of the settlement's historic core. The Petworth Conservation Area Appraisal states that the historic core of Petworth has a tight urban grain. The appeal site is situated within the character area – The Medieval Core and Market Place. High Street, running from the southern end of the original Market Place is the only original gridded street to be aligned east-west.
5. The PCA contains no less than 18 listed buildings, including 347 Leconfield and, Quoinstones. Some locally derived historic materials, such as sandstone cobbles and setts, and Victorian and later materials, such as Staffordshire Blue paving bricks, contribute to the local distinctiveness of the area.
6. On the fringes of the historic core, retaining walls form an important aspect of settlement character. The visual gap created by the front gardens and retaining

walls of the properties is intrinsic to the established character of this area of the High Street.

7. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the significance of the PCA stems from its historical development and function, the pattern of streets, spaces and buildings to be found there and the traditional design and construction of many of buildings.
8. No 347 Leconfield Estate¹ is a Grade II listed building that lies immediately to the west of the appeal site. It was originally two cottages and is now one, with the front elevation finished with red brick and the sides are finished stone rubble. The side elevation by the appeal site is partly screened by the raised grassed area at the front. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the significance of this building stems from its historic development within Petworth and from the traditional materials it is constructed from.
9. Quoinstones² is a Grade II listed building located directly opposite the appeal site. It is a C17 two storey cottage. It is finished with coursed stone with ashlar quoins. The cottage is slightly set back from the road and is bounded by a low stone wall along the front boundary. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the significance of this building stems from its historic development within Petworth and from its traditional design and materials.

Character and appearance of the PCA

10. The appeal proposal is to widen the existing pedestrian access, remove the banked earth, and construct a retaining wall in order to create a parking and turning area in front of the main buildings. The proposed retaining wall would be constructed with Wealden stone, and the stone details and coping to match those of the existing wall.
11. Most of the existing retaining wall at the front would be retained, cobbled stones to match the materials used on the cobbled surface next to Quoinstones would be used and the proposed hedges would soften the appearance of the proposal to some extent.
12. Whilst the existing elevated grassed area was formed following the demolition of the estate cottages in 1895, it contributes positively to the character and appearance of this stretch of High Street as it provides a pleasant soft landscape among the tight built form. The appellant suggests that the proposed design is landscape and townscape led, nevertheless, the proposed retaining wall would not be small in scale. The replacement of the well-established grass area with an elongated retaining wall and a large hardstanding area would not relate well to the original pattern of development along the street. Furthermore, when vehicles were parked there it would further diminish the traditional character and appearance of this part of the PCA. For these reasons the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the PCA.

Setting of nearby listed buildings

13. The appeal proposal would remove the elevated grassed area, as such, it would provide an opportunity to better reveal the side elevation of this listed building. However, the built form and the introduction of parked vehicles to this area would

¹ List entry number - 1266425

² List entry number - 1225387

detract from its setting to some extent. Overall, the effect of the proposal on the setting of No 347 would be neutral, thereby preserving its significance.

14. The appeal site is physically separated from Quoinstones by the road and the new retaining wall would be set further back from High Street. Together with the retention of much of the retaining wall and the hedgerow planting, the proposal would have a neutral effect on the setting of Quoinstones and in my judgement, would preserve its significance.
15. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, as in this case, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Planning Balance

16. Accordingly, although the proposal would preserve the setting of the listed buildings, it would detract from the character and appearance of the PCA causing less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset; this harm would be towards the lower end of the scale.
17. Paragraph 212 of the Framework states when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
18. I have already considered the effects of the proposal on the setting of No 347. The appellant suggests that the removal of the bank would help to prevent water ingress to No 347 and thereby protect the fabric of the building, which would be a public benefit. However, few details of the extent of the existing water ingress and the effect on the building are before me, and in any event, I agree with the Council that the proposal would not be the only means of addressing such an issue. Therefore, these matters only attract limited weight.
19. The appellant has also suggested that the provision of private car parking spaces here would help to address the existing parking pressures in the area. However, there is little evidence before me to demonstrate the extent or severity of local parking pressures, or the effect of the proposal in this regard. Consequently, I give this public benefit only limited weight.
20. The proposal would provide a secure and accessible location for recycling bins. However, as with the private car parking spaces and electric vehicle charging points, these would be largely private benefits and therefore these matters only attract little weight.
21. For these reasons there are no public benefits that would outweigh the less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset I have identified.
22. Overall, whilst the proposal would preserve the setting of the listed buildings, the development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the PCA. It would conflict with Policies SD1, SD4, SD5, SD6, SD12, D13 and SD15 of the South Downs Local Plan Adopted 2 July 2019 (2014-2033). These policies seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment, and to safeguard the local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

23. I note that the Authority has not raised objections in terms of highway safety. However, this does not alter my conclusion on the main issue.
24. The appellant refers to pre-application discussions with the Authority. However, I am mindful that pre-application discussions are not binding on any future decision the Authority may make. Therefore, this matter does not lead me to a different conclusion on the main issue in this case.

Conclusion

25. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

O Tresise

INSPECTOR