

Objection to Planning Application Ref. SDNP/25/01323/FUL

This objection is being made on behalf of CPRE –Sussex, the countryside charity.

The proposal site occupies rather dominant position with a rolling landscape of South Downs viewed from Woodcote Lane. The existing building of former ‘White Horse’ would retain and two outbuildings of a good quality which served as a visitors accommodation would be demolished.

The existing layout of the site is very sensitive to its location and is surrounded by an unspoiled natural landscape. The existing pub would serve as an ‘affordable bistro’ and 6 substantial buildings (2 of them two-storey), 4 smaller units and a flat roofed building of a great size are proposed. The layout of 4 small units would give a residential feel with kind of front gardens which is entirely inappropriate in this countryside location.

The official description of the proposal is ‘Extension and remodelling of the existing pub and guest rooms to provide a bistro, restaurant, and 16 guest bedrooms in detached lodges, with associated works’.

The proposed development is located outside of settlement boundaries as defined on the Policies Map. Outside of settlement boundaries, land will be treated as open countryside (paragraph of LP) for the purposes of Policy SD25.

Policy SD25 acknowledges exceptional circumstances whereby development outside settlements may be acceptable, however, none of them are applicable for the proposed development. Policy SD25 also provides some limited flexibility, in exceptional circumstances, to allow ‘brownfield’ development outside settlement boundaries, where demonstrably necessary to meet the wider objectives of this Local Plan. An example would be where development necessary to uphold the purposes of the National Park can be provided on previously developed land as an alternative to encroaching on undeveloped countryside. Paragraph 7.12 stresses that all development on previously developed land (PDL) must always be within the context of a ‘landscape first’ approach whereby previously developed sites will not automatically be the best in landscape terms. Any proposal for re-use of PDL outside settlement boundaries must have full regard to Purpose 1 and the special quality of an environment shaped by centuries of farming. Wider development needs and pressures will not be accepted as a reason to develop on any site outside of settlement boundaries. Paragraph 7.14 underlines that it is equally important to recognise that efficient use of land does not translate to overdevelopment of sites in the context of the surrounding area and setting.

Exceptionally, development will be permitted outside of settlement boundaries, where it complies with relevant policies in this Local Plan; there is an essential need for a

countryside location; or in the case of community infrastructure, there is a proven need for the development that demonstrably cannot be met elsewhere; or It is an appropriate reuse of a previously developed site and the development proposals deliver multiple benefits in line with the purposes and the special qualities of the National Park and in regard to ecosystem services.

Other exceptions to the development strategy are set out in other policies in the Local Plan, such as policies SD23: Sustainable Tourism and SD29: Rural Exception Sites. Robust evidence will need to be provided to support applications for such developments to demonstrate that an exceptional approach is fully justified.

Strategic Policy SD34: Sustaining the Local Economy states: ‘development proposals that foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park will be permitted provided that they meet one or more of the following:

Promote and protect businesses linked to the National Park’s key sectors of farming, forestry and tourism.

The purpose of Policy SD4 is to set out how development proposals will be expected to conserve and enhance landscape character in the National Park. Reference to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty includes conservation of its flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features (section 114(2) NPAC 1949 for National Parks.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires a great weight which should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

The landscape proposal due to its size, location, scale of change of the development and change in the setting would have an effect on significance of surrounded landscape of the National Park. Setting is more than just views; it includes the experience of the landscape. The proposed landscape is lacking wildness and tranquillity, the qualities which the site recently possesses.

None of the above exceptions would apply for the proposed development which is introducing a destination restaurant to the South Downs served by a high-end kitchen aiming for Michelin Green Star credentials along with ‘bespoke’ guest bedrooms which are not aimed for a local residents but for those who would afford it. Subsequently, a large parking area for 75 cars is proposed (screened by shrubs and trees which would obscure the view from the Woodcote Lane).

The proposed development would be entirely reliant on the use of private cars, hardly affordable for the local residents (with an exception of affordable bistro). Therefore far from sustainable as described elsewhere within submitted documentation.

Strategic Policy SD19: Transport and Accessibility expects development proposals to be located and designed to minimise the need to travel and promote the use of sustainable modes of transport and development proposals that are likely to generate a significant number of journeys must be located near existing town and village centres, public transport routes, main roads and, where relevant, the cycle network.

The proposed landscape and design is of a high quality, however, entirely in a wrong place, not suitable for the location within the National Park with its purposes:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public.
- To seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.

Strategic Policy SD8: Dark Night Skies requires development proposals to conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark night skies and the integrity of the Dark Sky Core what in spite of submitted LIGHTING IMPACT ASSESSMENT, the development as proposed would be difficult to achieve.

Paragraph 2 of the NPPF requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan², unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposed development would not be supported by any of the relevant policies within the Local Plan and as a consequence it should be refused.