Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2025

by L Francis BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3805/W/25/3368011
Europa House, 46-50 Southwick Square, Southwick, West Sussex BN42 4FJ

- 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 D Horney, Sound Investments Ltd against the decision of Adur District Council.
- The application Ref is AWDM/0294/25.
- The development proposed is "new vehicle access and parking area (4 spaces)".

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the appeal proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Southwick Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within the CA. The statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.

4. The Green is the focal point of the CA. Several of the streets within the CA have a view of this open space and the trees within and surrounding it, which lends this part of the CA a semi-rural and open feel. It has a largely residential character and encompasses various forms of domestic architecture including tightly packed small-scale terraces to the west of The Green, and large, low density detached Victorian and Edwardian villas to the north-east side of the CA. The houses surrounding The Green vary in age and style. The significance of the CA is derived from the pattern and style of built development showing the historic evolution of Southwick, and the juxtaposition of this development with the open, verdant character of The Green.

5. Europa House comprises a 3-storey detached 20th Century office building located in a prominent position on the corner of Southwick Square and The Green. There is a paved area in front of its west elevation, facing The Green. The wide paved area around the corner of Southwick Square and The Green, leading onto the large green space lends a pleasant, open aspect to the immediate surroundings.

6. The setting of Europa house is consistent with the open setting of the Public House on the opposite corner of the junction to the south. Even though there is a post and chain boundary treatment around the paved area, along with some street furniture

within the vicinity, the appeal site nevertheless contributes to the open aspect around The Green. The boundary treatment is not such that it diminishes the sense of openness.

7. There are domestic driveways with off-street parking to several houses around The Green and in other locations throughout the CA. Notwithstanding this, the appeal site is located in a prominent corner position at the main gateway between the commercial core and The Green. The introduction of parked vehicles on this area would introduce visual clutter such that it would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA.

8. In failing to preserve the character and appearance of the CA, I find that the proposal, in the words of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. In such circumstances, the Framework requires that the less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits.

9. The introduction of electric vehicle charging points would help to make the office premises more sustainable. There would also be a benefit derived from the additional 4 car parking spaces for use of the office building, along with the additional planting, which could include native street trees. There would be economic benefit in improving the facilities of a significant employment use. The appellant indicates that there would be additional benefit to the public through the freeing up of car parking spaces locally, which would benefit those seeking on-street parking to use the shops and services on Southwick Square.

10. The benefit derived from the additional 4 off street parking spaces would largely benefit the office and employees. The benefits to the wider public would be small and there is little substantive evidence before me to suggest that there is a shortage of on-street or other public parking available such that the provision of 4 off-street spaces for employees would have a tangible effect on the availability of parking locally.

11. Given the public benefits identified would be small in scale, I do not consider they would be sufficient to outweigh the identified less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.

12. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with Policies 15 and 17 of the Adur Local Plan 2017 and the policies of the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Taken together, these policies set out that development should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, and require a high standard of design and materials so as to respect, preserve and enhance the character and appearance of that area.

Other Matters

13. The Council consider the proposal to be acceptable in terms of its effect on the living conditions of nearby residents and upon highway safety. Whilst I acknowledge the concern of interested parties on the matter of highway safety, I have no compelling evidence before me which would lead me to reach a different conclusion. The lack of harm in these respects holds neutral weight in the overall planning balance.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

14. The less than substantial harm I have identified to the CA draws the proposal into conflict with the development plan read as a whole. The material considerations in this case, including the aforementioned public benefits of the scheme, do not indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

L Francis

INSPECTOR