Development Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0281/18 Recommendation – Refuse

Site: Europa House, 46 - 50 Southwick Square, Southwick

Proposal: Provision of vehicular access off The Green and creation of 2no. parking spaces.

Date of site visit: 5 April 2018

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a paved area on the west side of Europa House, an office building adjacent to The Green within the Southwick Conservation Area. The area is approximately 11m wide (including the pavement) and contains four raised planters close to the side of Europa House, containing flowers and palm trees.

As amended, the application is proposing to remove the northernmost planter and to construct two car parking spaces to be accessed via a new vehicular crossover to be constructed off The Green adjacent to the northern boundary with 34 The Green.

The application form states that extra staff parking is needed for Europa House to alleviate congestion on surrounding roads to make it easier for residents to park.

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: The **Highways** Officer has no objection to the crossover but it should span the width of both spaces to avoid maintenance issues with the footpath in the future.

Representations

Adur District Conservation Advisory Group: Recommend refusal. Cars would need to traverse across a pavement which is heavily used by pedestrians gaining access/egress to Southwick Square from The Green, in particular children and parents leaving the well used playground. Will create a dangerous situation which could lead to serious injury.

There have been requests for a pedestrian crossing at this location but were denied in view of serious risk to pedestrians.

Southwick Square used to be a no through road but this has changed and traffic movements in the area have increased.

Attractive flower beds currently soften the visual impact of the office block. This application would set a dangerous precedent where other areas around The Green could be tempted to do likewise which would impact on this attractive conservation area in the heart of this small town.

Southwick Square car park used to be free for one hour per vehicle but due to recently imposed parking charges it is now under used.
Previous tenant companies of Europa House have not suffered from parking problems. There is a public car park and a railway station, plus bus routes, close by.

Relevant Planning Policies

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policy 15, 17, 28
National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018)

Planning Assessment

Principle

The proposal involves providing additional parking for a local business. The relevant issues are the effects on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers, the effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the need for the development.

Impact on visual amenity and historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area

The site is a wide paved area at the side of the three storey office building. It is distinguished from the footpath by a change in material but is well used by pedestrians cutting across to reach Southwick Square shops. The side of the office building is softened by the existing raised planters and the area has an open character providing a sense of space, similar to that on the opposite corner of the junction to the south.

The office has a covered bike shelter positioned adjacent to the northern boundary, but it does not project beyond the side wall of the building and does not intrude into the open space. The proposal would remove the northernmost planter and provide two parking spaces adjacent to, but not obstructing, the bike shelter. The result would be to introduce parked cars into the open space which will detract from the visual amenities of the area and the setting of The Green. Consequently, it would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, contrary to advice in the NPPF and Policy 17 of the Adur Local Plan which states that:

"*Development in Conservation Areas will be required to be of a high standard of design and materials so as to respect, preserve and enhance the character and appearance of that area*."

The introduction of any parking in this area could lead to pressure in the future for further spaces to be provided while the depth of the hardsurface from the access to the parking spaces could enable cars to be parked in tandem. The

provision of the crossover could also tempt other drivers to park on the remaining area in front of the planters, further detracting from the area.

Residential amenity

The site adjoins a dwelling to the north which has its own parking space in the front garden, separated from the site by a brick and flint wall which screens that dwelling's parked cars from views from the south. The introduction of parked cars onto the site would be much more visible but would be sufficiently distant from the boundary with No.34 to not cause any loss of residential amenity.

Parking Need

Europa House currently has 9 parking spaces. Additional parking space is available in the Southwick Square public car park or on street. The site is accessible by public transport and there is a bike shelter at the site. Policy 28 of the Adur Local Plan states that new development should:

"*Ensure that new development is located and designed to minimise the need for travel, facilitates and promotes the use of sustainable alternatives to the private car*"

It is considered that the introduction of car parking within such a prominent location within the Conservation Area would be harmful and is not a successful solution to any perceived parking need. The extent of the parking problem has not been fully demonstrated by the applicant and it should be noted that the current tenants of Europa House will be relocating to a new office building currently under construction on the former Adur Civic Centre car park in Shoreham within the next year.

It is therefore considered that any need for the parking spaces does not outweigh the harm that would arise to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation

REFUSE, for the following reason:

The removal of a raised planter and the introduction of formal parking spaces into this open space would detract from the area and the setting of The Green and would cause visual harm. It would therefore fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Southwick Conservation Area, contrary to policies 15 and 17 of the Adur Local Plan and the relevant policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and discussing those with the Applicant. However, the issues are so fundamental to the proposal that it has not been possible to negotiate a

satisfactory way forward and due to the harm which has been clearly identified within the reason(s) for the refusal, approval has not been possible.

Case Officer: Peter Barnett Date: 19 September 2018

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 19 September 2018