



**PARK HOUSE HOTEL,  
BEPTON ROAD,  
BEPTON,  
NEAR MIDHURST  
WEST SUSSEX GU29 0JB**

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
TO ACCOMPANY PLANNING APPLICATION FOR REPLACEMENT WINDOWS, CHANGE OF USE OF SECOND FLOOR PLANT ROOM TO  
ADDITIONAL EN SUITE GUEST BEDROOM, REPLACEMENT PLANT ROOM, ALTERATIONS TO DORMER WINDOW AND HIPPED ROOF,  
AND GROUND FLOOR EXTENSIONS TO THE KITCHEN AREA**

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## INTRODUCTION

The proposals comprise a planning application for replacement windows, change of use of second floor plant room to additional en suite guest bedroom, replacement plant room, alterations to a dormer window and hipped roof, and ground floor extensions to the kitchen area at Park House Hotel, Bepton.



*Front elevation*



*Side elevation*



## THE SITE

Park House Hotel occupies a rural position on the northern edge of the village of Bepton, approximately two miles south west of Midhurst. The site is located within the Bepton Conservation Area and is on the eastern side of Bepton Road.

The original building dates back to around 1905 and was built as a private residential dwelling. In the late 1940s the premises started to be used as bed and breakfast accommodation for visitors associated with the international polo scene and has subsequently been established as a high quality country house hotel. Since first being used as a hotel the property has evolved and developed over many years in numerous different phases of work to cater for the changing expectations of guests. The hotel now has a total of twenty two ensuite bedrooms including some guest bedrooms in separate detached buildings. The main building has accommodation spread over three floors. There are high quality indoor and outdoor swimming pools, spa facilities and leisure facilities on site including golf, tennis, a bowling green and croquet. The hotel has an excellent reputation and they are passionate about providing accommodation and facilities to the very highest standard. The hotel also contains conference facilities.

The existing complex of buildings form an established, prominent feature within the village landscape and the primary frontage is readily visible from the public road.

There are a number of historic buildings within the village.

## LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The landscape and visual impact assessment has regard to the requirements of the development planning process. The planning framework assists in the identification of the issues related to landscape, particularly in relation to landscape designation and policy objectives.

### National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the government's planning policy. As the site lies within the South Downs National Park, paragraph 172 is of particular relevance. It states:

*Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.*

Section 12 of the Framework concerns achieving well-designed places.

*'The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve'* (Paragraph 124). Paragraph 127 states that:

*Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*

- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

Section 15 of the Framework relates to 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. The means by which this can be achieved are set out within Paragraph 170 and include:

*`Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; .....*

Section 16 addresses the protection and enjoyment of heritage assets including Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings. Potential effects on the landscape setting to a heritage asset are also addressed. Paragraph 184 states that:

*Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites, which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.*

The following planning policies are pertinent to the proposals:

### **South Downs National Park Purposes**

The two statutory purposes of the South Downs National Park are:

- *To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area;*
- *To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area.*

In addition, The National Park Authority also has a duty when carrying out the purposes:

- *To seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.*

### **South Downs National Park Local Plan**

The South Downs National Park Local Plan was adopted on 2 July 2019. The document and the policies contained therein are now a material consideration when determining planning applications within the National Park.

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

- Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services;
- Policy SD4: Landscape Character;
- Policy SD5: Design;



- Policy SD8: Dark Night Skies;
- Policy SD11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows; and
- Policy SD25: Development Strategy.

## **LOCAL LAND USE AND VEGETATION**

The site is located on the edge of the village of Bepton, and surrounding areas are generally in residential or agricultural use. Boundaries are generally delineated by mature hedgerows or trees.

## **DESIGNATIONS**

The site lies within the South Downs National Park and also within the Bepton Conservation Area. The property is not a listed building. The front of the property faces the public highway. The rear of the property is not readily visible from any public vantage points.

## **LANDSCAPE BASELINE**

The site lies close to the southern edge of the south western part of National Character Area No. 120: Wealden Greensand. The key characteristics of this NCA are listed below:

- *A long, narrow belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography, including outcrops of Upper Greensand, Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. The Greensand forms escarpments separated by a clay vale: the overall undulating and organic landform – particularly in the west – gives a sense of intimacy to the landscape. Leith Hill in Surrey is the highest point in south-east England.*
- *There are extensive areas of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch, with some areas having been converted to sweet chestnut coppice in past centuries. These areas reflect the diverse geology, including the distinctive chalk grassland elements within the East*

*Hampshire Hangers Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the wooded commons ('charts') of East Surrey and West Kent, and conifer plantations.*

- Semi-natural habitats include: remnant lowland heathland, mostly concentrated in West Sussex, Hampshire and West Surrey; the wetlands associated with the River Arun in West Sussex; and unimproved acid grasslands found in commons, parklands, heathland and other areas of unimproved pasture.*
- Fields are predominantly small or medium, in irregular patterns derived from medieval enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows and shaws, with character and species reflecting the underlying soils. On the clay, hedgerows are dense and species-rich, with occasional standard oaks. On more acidic soils they generally consist of hawthorn and blackthorn, also with occasional oak trees, and often trimmed low.*
- Agricultural land comprises a mosaic of mixed farming, with pasture and arable land set within a wooded framework. There is a fruit-growing orchard belt in Kent and also around Selborne in Hampshire.*
- The rural settlement pattern is a mixture of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and some nucleated villages. Large houses set within extensive parks and gardens are found throughout the area.*
- In the east of Kent, the Wealden Greensand has a gentler and more open aspect than in the wooded west. This part of the area is also more marked by development, with the presence of major towns and communication corridors such as the M26, M25 and M20 motorways and railway lines including the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (High Speed 1).*
- The local built vernacular includes the use of Greensand, ragstone and, in the west, malmstone, bargate stone, plus dark carrstone patterned in the mortar between stones ('galleting') in Surrey, as well as timber-framing and weatherboarding.*
- There are a range of historic landscape features, including field monuments, old military defences, prehistoric tumuli, iron-age hill forts, Roman forts, the Royal Military Canal, small quarries and relics of the iron industry (including hammer ponds). Sunken lanes cut into the sandstone are a historic and characteristic feature, as are older deer parks and more recent 18th-century parklands.*
- Surface water is an important feature across the Greensand, with many streams and rivers passing through the NCA: the Western Rother, Wey, Arun, Medway and the Great and East Stour.*



- *The Greensand ridge meets the coast of Kent between Folkestone Warren and Hythe. While most of the coastal strip is now built up and protected by sea defences, the undeveloped sea cliffs at Copt Point provide important geological exposures, are designated for their nature conservation interest and fall within the Dover–Folkestone Heritage Coast.*

The NCAs cover large geographical extents, thus the degree to which the NCA descriptions are appropriate to a localised assessment can be limited.

The key characteristics of the Wealden Greensand National Character Area would not be affected by the proposals.

### **Regional / County Scale**

The Landscape Character Assessment produced by West Sussex County Council places the site close to the southern boundary of the Western Scarp Footslopes (ref WG1). This lies at the foot of the adjacent chalk escarpment of the South Downs, extending from Harting in the west to Bury in the east. Low ridges and vales with a varied patchwork of field patterns over sand and clay create a secluded, tranquil landscape punctuated by historic villages. The key characteristics of this area are listed below:

- *Rolling relief of low ridges and vales with dramatic views of the chalk escarpment to the south.*
- *Many winterbourne streams flowing northwards from the base of the chalk escarpment.*
- *Picturesque, traditional spring line villages with stone churches.*
- *Patchwork of farmland and woodland interlaced with a varied pattern of hedgerows.*
- *Narrow winding lanes, often sunken and enclosed by hedge banks, link the settlements.*
- *Managed parkland and estate landscapes*
- *Larger areas of woodland over the clay and numerous streams define the field boundaries.*
- *The densities of copses, streamside woodlands and hedgerow trees tend to increase towards the edges of settlements.*
- *Settlements are small and usually clustered with a strong historic character and few suburban influences.*
- *The influence of the large country houses and estates is strong in some settlements.*

- *Varied building materials include flint, clunch (both chalk and white sandstone), brick, local sandstone and half-timber.*
- *Villages, scattered farms and designed parklands provide a wealth of detail and interest*

The key characteristics of the Western Scarp Footslopes Landscape Character Assessment would not be affected by the proposals.

### **Landscaping and Planting**

Existing planting would not be affected by the proposals and would be fully retained. No new planting forms part of the proposals.

### **Appearance**

Extensions and alterations are proposed in a number of different locations which briefly are:

- Alterations to existing dormer window and hipped roof at second floor level;
- Modestly proportioned single storey extension to the kitchen area;
- Replacement windows throughout the main building;
- New plant room forming an extension of the existing laundry building.

The proposed external appearance would entirely complement the existing range of buildings and would help to improve and enhance the existing appearance. The alterations to the dormer windows would complement the existing appearance and would not change the existing overall roof height. The proposed extensions to the kitchen area are located to the rear of the premises and would not be readily visible. The most noticeable area of work would be the proposed relocated plant room, which would form an extension to the existing laundry. This building is located close to the frontage at the edge of the main parking area. The proposed new extension would be of an appropriate external appearance and would broadly have the appearance of a typical small scale, rural building. A feature of the building would be a central roof vent on the ridge line, which would also serve a practical purpose for venting of plant and equipment. The proposed plant room extension would not visually compete with the host building and would have a significantly smaller mass, bulk and scale than other buildings within the site.



*Area of the proposed single storey kitchen extensions  
(concealed by mature planting)*



*Second floor dormer window and hipped central roof to be altered*



*Panoramic street elevation (existing laundry to be extended on left hand side)*



*Existing single storey laundry building to be extended to form relocated plant room*



## **SUMMARY**

An entirely sympathetic and appropriate design approach has been taken with the application for proposals at Park House Hotel. The proposals would comply with relevant planning policies, and would not cause harm to the host building nor the wider setting.

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