



de Courcy
town planning consultants

Planning Statement

Dunford House, Dunford
Hollow, West Lavington
GU29 0AF

Prepared For
The Wonder House Group
Limited

1186
November 2023

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PROPOSAL	2
3	RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY	5
4	RELEVANT POLICY CONSIDERATIONS	7
5	HERITAGE STATEMENT	9
6	LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL	11
7	WATER NEUTRALITY	12
8	ECOSYSTEM SERVICES	13
9	TREES	15
10	BIODIVERSITY	16
11	LIGHTING STATEMENT	17
12	NOISE ASSESSMENT	18
13	SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT	19
14	SUSTAINING THE LOCAL ECONOMY	21
15	CONCLUSIONS	22

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This application seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the extension and alteration of the existing residential conference/training centre (C2 use) at Dunford House, Dunford Hollow, West Lavington. The application is submitted on behalf of the owners of the property, The Wonder House Group.

1.2 This Statement incorporates the following which are required for validation:

- Heritage Assessment
- Lighting Assessment
- Noise Assessment
- Ecosystem Services Statement
- Sustainability Assessment

1.3 In addition to this supporting statement, the application is accompanied by the following documents:

- Design and Access Statement prepared by Re-Format Architects
- Transport Statement prepared by i-transport
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment prepared by David Archer Associates
- Ecological Assessment prepared by EAS
- Ecological Addendum and Supplementary Bat AAe Environmental Consultants
- Supplementary Bat Report prepared by AAe Environmental Consultants
- Heritage Statement prepared by Regini

2 DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The site lies in about 1.5 km to the south-east of Midhurst and is accessed via Dunford Hollow from the A286 Chichester Road.
- 2.2 Dunford House was built between 1848 and 1853 and is a Grade II listed property for both architectural and historic interest. It plays an important part of the cultural heritage of the National Park, being the ancestral home of the politician, Richard Cobden and his daughters Annie and Jane Cobden who were prominent in the suffragette movement.
- 2.3 The house sits within grounds of about 1.7 hectares. The site was purchased by the applicants in 2020 and is used as a residential conference and training centre (C2 use). Prior to this, the site was owned by the YMCA who used the site as a conference and training centre. During its ownership by the YMCA, the house was extended to the rear over the former kitchen garden in the early 1960s. These extensions included 31 guest bedrooms and a linked 3 bedroom manager's house to the south-west of the house

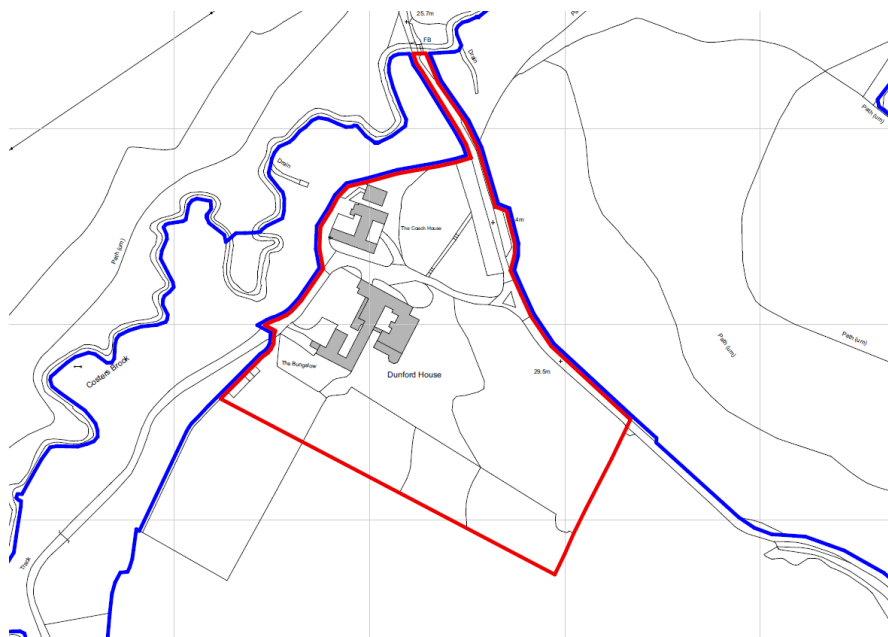


Figure.1 – Dunford House and its surroundings

- 2.4 To the north of the house are a number of outbuildings including the converted coach house which provides a further guest 6 bedrooms.

- 2.5 Vehicular access to the house rises up the slope to the north of the house providing access to the house and coach house with parking to the north side of the house.
- 2.6 To the bottom of the slope to the north of the house is an extensive open parking area providing parking for about 43 cars on both sides of Dunford Hollow. Steps rise from the car park to the house.
- 2.7 To the north of Dunford Hollow and to the west of the house is woodland. The landscape to the south of the house is more open and in agricultural use.
- 2.8 As well as being an adopted road, Dunford Hollow is also a restricted by-way (By-way 962) which runs through the car parking area.
- 2.9 Following extensive refurbishment by the applicants, the building is currently in use for C2 purposes as a retreat where delegates can learn about wellness and wellbeing whilst staying at the property or visiting.
- 2.10 The application proposes two extensions to the 1960s additions to the rear of the house. Photographs of these extensions can be found in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- 2.11 An existing conservatory and glazed covered walkway which provides a covered link between buildings would be removed.
- 2.12 Dunford House has a lawful C2 use as a residential training, educational and conference venue. The applicant has invested heavily in refurbishing the existing facilities in the house which are in use for educational and training purposes associated with wellbeing. The site is ideally located for this use given its tranquil setting.
- 2.13 The quality of the current conference space is poor. The space available is outdated and poorly configured for hosting seminars, workshops and talks. The proposed extensions seek to address this by reconfiguring the existing rooms and extending them to provide flexible high quality space to meet the current and future needs of the business.

2.14 The proposed extensions would add 188 sq.m GIA on to the existing GIA is 1897 sq.m (see Figure.2 below).

Dunford House (Gross Internal Area)				
Scope	Existing (m2)	Demolished (m2)	New (m2)	Proposed Total (m2)
House	1148	0	0	1148
Conference Room(s)	99	0	97	196
The Bungalow	157	0	91	248
Covered Area	29	29	0	0
Coach House	382	0	0	382
Warren	82	0	0	82
TOTALS	1897	29	188	2056

Figure.2 – Existing and proposed floor areas

2.15 The existing conference room would be extended to provide additional conference space with the existing conference area used as a breakout space. The extension would have a contemporary appearance with flat green roof with contemporary glazing and white rendered and timber elevations.

2.16 The existing manager’s accommodation would be converted to provide a flexible space which would be used for dining, studio, conference, teaching and breakout space. The roof of the building would be removed and replaced with a vaulted ceiling internally. Rooflights are proposed to provide natural lighting of space. The existing poor quality glazing in the south elevation of the building would be replaced with contemporary critall style glazing.

2.17 The extension to the manager’s accommodation would cover a small courtyard area to the eastern side of the current manager’s dwelling and a link would be built between the two extensions. A kitchen would be formed within the existing manager’s dwelling utility room and a small extension added.

2.18 Further information relating to the design approach taken is set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The planning history relating to the application site is summarised in the table below.

SDNP/22/05477/FUL and SDNP/22/05478/LIS	Change of use of conference and training centre (C2 Use Class) to conference and training centre (C2 Use Class), events venue (Sui Generis) and heritage information area (F1(c) Use Class) with public access (number of days tbc) and replacement manager's accommodation	Refused 2023	September
SDNP/20/01390/FUL and SDNP/20/01391/LIS	Change of use of listed building (Use Class C2) to a single dwellinghouse (Use Class C3), including demolition of modern extension and external and internal alterations	Appeal August 2021	dismissed
SDNP/20/01588/LDE	Existing lawful development certificate for self-contained dwelling (Use Class C3)	Refused 2020	September
SDNP/22/02151/FUL and SDNP/22/02152/LIS	Change use of conference and training centre (C2 Use Class) to conference and training centre (C2 Use Class), hotel (C1 Use Class), events venue (Sui Generis Use Class) and heritage information area (F1(c) Use Class) with public access (number of days tbc), associated works and formation of new vehicular access and driveway (alternative proposal application SDNP/21/05949/FUL)	Withdrawn	
SDNP/21/05949/FUL and SDNP/21/05950/LIS	Change of use of conference and training centre (C2 Use Class) to conference and training centre (C2 Use Class), hotel (C1 Use Class), events venue (Sui Generis Use Class) and heritage information area (F1(c) Use Class) with public access (number of days tbc), and associated works	Withdrawn	
HY/1/52	Alterations and use as a YMCA college	Approved	April 1952

3.2 The reasons for the refusal of application SDNP/22/05477/FUL related to water neutrality and concern that the proposed events use would result in increased levels of activity and vehicle movements which in turn would result in an adverse impact on landscape character, tranquillity and amenity. The officer report relating to the application made it clear that a principal concern was intense levels of traffic associated with events uses.

3.3 The officer report agreed that the existing lawful use of the property is C2 use, and that the original permission HY/1/52 did not place restrictions on the use. The Council therefore agreed that this is a material fallback position.

3.4 Whilst the report expressed concerns over the restraint imposed by the limitations of the access via Dunford Hollow, these concerns were not shared by the Highway Authority who raised no objection to the application. This recommendation was made on the proviso of the following:

- a travel plan was agreed
- a financial contribution is agreed to reducing the speed limit on the road and maintenance of the road together with the formalisation of the parking area
- agreement to an events management plan to be implemented during events. The

The officer report accepted the position of the Highway Authority.

3.5 The report refers to the comments of the conservation officer who considered the modern rear extensions and the manager's accommodation to be of "no particular merit" and of poor quality, detracting from the character of the listed building. The modern design of the proposed extensions were welcomed as this would "allow a clear distinction between the listed building and the new addition."

4 RELEVANT POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan comprises the South Downs Local Plan. Also material to the consideration of this application is the National Planning Policy Framework.

4.2 The following policies have been taken into consideration in the development of the scheme:

- Policy SD1 – Sustainable Development
- Policy SD2 – Ecosystem Services
- Policy SD4 – Landscape Character
- Policy SD8 – Dark Night Skies
- Policy D5 – Design
- SD9 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SD11 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy SD12 Historic Environment
- Policy SD13 Listed Buildings
- Policy SD19 Transport and Accessibility
- Policy SD34 Sustaining the Local Economy

4.3 The adopted Parking SPD and Design Guide SPD amplify the policies of the Local Plan and are therefore relevant to the consideration of the application.

4.4 In addition, paragraph 81 of the NPPF requires that planning decisions should help create conditions where businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Paragraph 84 supports this objective and requires that decisions enable:

“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”

5 HERITAGE STATEMENT

5.1 Policy SD12 of the Local Plan requires that new development is permitted only where it conserves and enhances the historic environment. It also requires that a heritage statement is provided sufficient to allow an informed assessment of the impact of the development on the significance of the heritage asset.

5.2 A detailed Heritage Statement was produced by Regini Heritage in relation to the earlier applications on this site. This report sets out the historical and architectural significance of the building and provides the information necessary to understand the significance of the house and its extension and outbuildings.

5.3 Of particular relevance to this application is the significance given on the report to the *1960's extensions to the rear of the historic house*. The report states:

"The 1960's extensions by the YMCA are of no significance and are explicitly excluded from the designation of the listed building"

5.4 The conservation officer, in his comments relating to application SDNP/22/05478/LIS supports this view and stated:

"The existing extensions are poor quality and have a cumulative negative impact on the setting of the main listed house."

5.5 The proposed extensions involve the removal of poor quality and unsightly modern conservatory and covered link structures and their replacement with a contemporary flat roofed extension to the existing conference space and the contemporary extension and remodelling of the manager's accommodation. The extensions are remote from the rear of the historic rear elevation of the house so would have no impact on the historic fabric of the listed building. The contemporary design of the extensions would represent a considerable enhancement of this area which in turn would enhance the setting of the main building.

5.6 This view is supported by the conservation officer who supported the contemporary approach to the design of the extensions proposed in application SDNP/22/05478/LIS.

5.7 In view of the above it considered that the changes proposed would enhance the setting of the main listed building.

6 LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

- 6.1 Policy SD4 of the Local Plan requires that new development preserves and enhances landscape character and that the experiential and amenity qualities of the landscape is safeguarded. Similarly, policy SD5 requires that a landscape led approach is taken to respect local character and that, through positive design, new development has a positive impact on local character.
- 6.2 South Downs Landscape character mapping shows Dunford House at the northern edge of character area K1: Rother Valley Mixed Farmland and Woodland Vales as described in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA) 2011.
- 6.3 Immediately to the north Costers Brook and the belt of woodland, Dunford Roughts, extend into Landscape Character Area L2: Rother Farmland and Heath Mosaic Character Area. This area is described as having 'a sense of intimacy and enclosure' and being sensitive to change because of its 'remote and tranquil character'.
- 6.4 The woodland to the west and north of the property excludes any longer distance views towards the property. Whilst the house can be viewed from Dunford Hollow, the property is raised up and this limits the visibility mainly to the north-eastern corner of the property. The proposed extensions would not be seen from Dunford Hollow as they would be screened by the existing buildings.
- 6.5 There are no views from the west towards the house due to the dense woodland to the west and north-west of the house. There are also no close views from the south and south-east of the property. The changes to the roof and fenestration of the manager's house are minor and would not be perceptible in longer distance views.
- 6.6 With regard to tranquillity, the extensions are unlikely to result in any material/perceivable change in terms of traffic generation over that which can already take place in relation to the lawful use of the property.

7 WATER NEUTRALITY

- 7.1 Policy SD9 requires that new development conserves and enhances biodiversity, including internationally important SACs. The Authority is required to complete an Appropriate Assessment to consider the impacts of the proposed development on the Arun Valley SAC before determining this application.
- 7.2 The Validation Checklist adopted by the Authority is clear that a water neutrality statement is only required if there would be a material increase in the use of water as a result of the development. Therefore, if there is no material change it would be reasonable to conclude that there would be no significant impact on the SAC.
- 7.3 The proposal would result in the removal of three bedrooms as a result of the reconfiguration of the manager's accommodation. There are no proposals to increase the number of toilets, showers or washbasins in the scheme.
- 7.4 The proposed extensions seek only to improve the quality of the accommodation within the existing use and not to increase the quantity of visitors who can be accommodated in the building.
- 7.5 Low water consumption fittings would be used in the new kitchen and A rated appliances used. The kitchen area replaces the utility space and kitchen in the manager's dwelling and would reduce pressure on the existing kitchen in the main building.
- 7.6 In view of the above, it is considered that the proposals would not materially increase water usage and consequently a water neutrality report is not required to support the application.

8 ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

8.1 Policy SD2 is the key Development Plan Policy directing the application of ES. It states, "Development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. This will be achieved through the use of high quality design, and by delivering all opportunities to:

h) Sustainably manage land and water environments;

Response – The proposed extension would be on previously developed land and would therefore have no impact on the land or water environments

i) Protect and provide more, better and joined up natural habitats;

Response – The application proposed green roofs on the flat roofed buildings which would increase the habitat on the site. The changes to the car park offer the opportunity to introduce new landscaping which would increase habitat. Bat and bird boxes will be provided within the site.

j) Conserve water resources and improve water quality;

Response – There are no changes proposed to the existing taps or sanitary ware within the building. The proposed kitchen area would be fitted with water efficient taps and appliances

k) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding;

Response – The application proposes to add a green roof to the existing flat roof building and on the proposed conference space and link which would reduce run-off rates bearing in mind the extensions will be built over existing non-permeable surfacing

l) Improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change;

Response – The proposed extensions and the refurbished space would be thermally efficient and designed to prevent overheating

m) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means;

Response – see response to i) above

n) *Conserve and enhance soils, use soils sustainably and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land;*

Response – the siting of the extensions are on previously developed areas and therefore soil resource would not be impacted. The topsoil removed to increase parking would be stored for re-use on the site

o) *Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials;*

Response – N/A

p) *Reduce levels of pollution;*

Response – EV charging points would be provided adjacent to the building

q) *Improve opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing; and*

Response – The facilities are to support the existing use of the building which is focussed on wellbeing

r) *Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources which contribute the special qualities*

Response - Guests staying or visiting the building would be able to explore the surrounding area and enjoy use of the listed building. Information will be provided to guests and visitors relating to the history of the property and how to access the local footpath network. The enhancement of the listed building through the changes proposed would enhance the cultural resources of the National Park

9 TREES

- 9.1 There are no trees impacted upon by the proposed extensions. The proposed changes to the car park area are as proposed in the previous application and therefore the Arboricultural impact assessment prepared by David Archer Associates dated November 2022 remains relevant to this application (this report is resubmitted with this application). No concerns were raised by the Authority in relation to the impact of the car park proposals on adjacent trees.
- 9.2 The woodland to the west of the site is designated ancient woodland. The submitted proposed site plan shows the extent of the 15 buffer to the woodland. No development will take place within the buffer area which will be protected with fencing to contain the building operations and reduce noise and dust impacts. A construction and environmental management plan (CEMP) can be secured by condition to prevent dust or run-off from the site impacting on the ancient woodland.
- 9.3 In view of the above proposed mitigation it is considered that the proposed development would not, directly or indirectly, impact on the ancient woodland.

10 BIODIVERSITY

- 10.1 Policy SD9 of the Local Plan requires that development proposals conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 10.2 The ecological assessment prepared by AAe Environmental Consultants in March 2020 concluded that there were no ecological constraints on the site.
- 10.3 A bat report was prepared by AAe Environmental Consultants in November 2022 in relation to the previous application. This report is resubmitted in support of this application. No evidence of bats either internally or externally were recorded during inspections and the emergence survey carried out in August 2022 confirmed that no bats were seen emerging from the building.
- 10.4 There would be no loss of biodiversity as a result of the proposed extensions to the property or the alterations to the car park.
- 10.5 Biodiversity enhancements would be provided through the introduction of bat and bird boxes in appropriate locations on the site. New planting associated with the car park alterations would use native planting. These measures would ensure that the policy requirement of policy SD9 is met.

11 LIGHTING STATEMENT

- 11.1 Policy SD8 of the Local Plan requires that development conserves and enhances the intrinsic quality of dark night skies and that new proposals demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution are taken.
- 11.2 The proposed alterations to the manager's accommodation includes the installation of rooflights to provide natural lighting of the internal space. These rooflights can either have automatic blinds fitted to prevent light spillage during the hours of darkness or be glazed using Saint-Gobain Solar Control glazing. These details can be agreed by condition.
- 11.3 The existing external lighting on the manager's dwellings and the existing conference conservatory and glazed walkway would be removed and replaced with more appropriate directional lighting. The details of any proposed external lighting are not known at this stage and therefore this can be agreed via condition. Any external lighting proposed will have regard to the advice set out within the Dark Skies TAN and any external lighting required would have a clear purpose.

12 NOISE ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 Policy SD34 requires that new development does not have a significant and negative on people or the natural environment.
- 12.2 The proposed extensions would not increase the level of noise generated on the site compared to the current lawful use of the building.
- 12.3 Any new ventilation equipment required in relation to the new kitchen serving the multifunction space would be selected to ensure that it is designed to a to a BS4142 Rating Noise Level which is 10 dB below the existing minimum typical background noise levels.
- 12.4 There would be no material change in vehicular movements associated with the extensions and therefore the development would not have a significant negative impact on residents residing close to the access road and parking area.

13 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

- 13.1 Using the principle of “Fabric First”, the proposed extension will employ superior wall, floor and roof systems in conjunction with fenestration in excess of the efficiency required for Building Regulations. This will provide a highly insulated, well-detailed envelope that will enable the extensions and the existing internal areas to be adapted a high level of energy efficiency and internal comfort. The same benefit would be derived from the refurbishment of the existing manager’s dwelling.
- 13.2 Green roofs would be provided over the existing conference space and the proposed conference room extension.
- 13.3 Although a travel plan is not required in relation to proposed development, the applicant, in the interests of the customer experience, proposes to develop a Travel Plan to encourage the uptake of sustainable modes of travel where possible. Further details are set out in Section 5 of the Transport Statement.
- 13.4 EV charging points would be provided adjacent to the house.
- 13.5 All materials used in the construction would be from sustainable sources.
- 13.6 Low water consumption fittings and appliances would be used.

14 SUSTAINING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- 14.1 Policy SD34 seeks to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities and allow flexibility for established businesses in the National Park to secure future resilience.
- 14.2 The building is currently in use for C2 purposes as a retreat where delegates can learn about wellness and wellbeing whilst staying at the property or visiting. Typically, events would be run over a number of days allowing attendees staying overnight in the house to enjoy the scenic qualities of the National Park.
- 14.3 The conference/teaching market is changing as a result of remote conferencing and therefore venues such as Dunford House need to be able to compete by offering high quality accommodation and by providing a range of experiences for attendees.
- 14.4 The applicant has invested in upgrading the overnight accommodation but the existing conference/teaching space is poor quality and in need of upgrading to meet modern day requirements. The extensions would provide comfortable, naturally lit space and would enable the installation provision of up to date audio visual equipment. Converting the existing conference space to provide a breakout space provides an area where delegates can take breaks and space for break out groups to use.
- 14.5 The proposed space created by extending and adapting the manager's accommodation would provide a flexible space for group exercise and wellbeing classes and provide improved dining space in addition to the use of this space for seminars and workshops.
- 14.6 The proposals would therefore help to ensure that the business becomes more resilient and sustainable in the longer term, thus ensuring its continued benefit to the local economy at the same time as maintaining the optimal viable use of the listed building.

15 CONCLUSIONS

- 15.1 Following the refusal of the application to extend the range of activities to diversify the range of uses the applicant has had to look to other ways to ensure that the building remains in beneficial use. The application seeks to improve the facilities on offer to ensure that the business has a sustainable future. The alterations proposed would improve the quality of the facilities on offer to help achieve this objective.
- 15.2 The high quality contemporary design of the proposed extensions would improve the setting of the main house and help maintain the optimum viable use of the listed building.
- 15.3 The proposed extensions would have no harmful impact on the landscape character of the area, its tranquillity or its scenic qualities. In addition, the proposals would enhance the biodiversity of the site and the proposed extensions would satisfy the sustainability objectives of policy.
- 15.4 In view of the above, it is considered that the proposals are compliant with the requirements of the development plan.