

**SDNP/20/04118/FUL – The Queens Hotel, Selborne – Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Economy comments – December 2020**

Thank you for seeking comments on the above application from the **Thrive Team on Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Economy**. These two topics are very interrelated for these proposals and as such the comments below address both matters together.

- A variety of policies in the **South Downs Local Plan (SDLP)** are relevant to this proposal. Those to which I have particular comments to make in regard to tourism and economy are:
  - Policy **SD23** Sustainable Tourism
  - Policy **SD34** Sustainable the Local Economy
  - Policy **SD43** New and Existing Community Facilities
  
- The following priorities of the 2020-2025 South Downs **Partnership Management Plan (PMP)** are particularly relevant to this proposal:
  - **OUTCOME 4: ARTS & HERITAGE** - Cultural heritage of the National Park is enhanced and widely understood and enjoyed.
    - 4.1 CONSERVE HERITAGE - To increase conservation, awareness, access to and understanding of South Downs cultural heritage.
  - **OUTCOME 5: OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCES** - Outstanding experiences for communities and visitors are supported by high quality access and sustainable transport networks.
  - **OUTCOME 6: LIFELONG LEARNING** - There is widespread understanding of the special qualities of the National Park and the benefits it provides.
    - 6.1 PROVIDE OUTDOOR LEARNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - To provide high-quality outdoor learning opportunities as part of a locally relevant curriculum.
  - **OUTCOME 10: GREAT PLACES TO WORK** - A diverse, sustainable, dynamic economy which is positively linked to the special qualities of the National Park
    - 10.1: STRENGTHEN ENTERPRISE - To strengthen and support sustainably managed land-based industries and local enterprise.
    - 10.2: INCREASE DESTINATION AWARENESS - To increase awareness and desirability of the South Downs as a special place to visit.
    - 10.3: PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM - To establish the South Downs as an exemplar in sustainable tourism.
  
- Current permitted use for The Queens is a public house (Use Class A4) and it is noted that the first floor of the property was previously used to provide visitor accommodation in the form of four en suite letting bedrooms.
  
- As recognised by paragraph **7.227** of the SDLP, public houses are considered community infrastructure facilities for the purposes of Policy **SD43**. This development proposal involves the redevelopment of the Queens Hotel building and the loss of the public house. **SD43(2)** sets out the requirements for loss of such community facilities. **SD43(2)(c)** allows for the provision of alternative community facilities that are inclusive, available, accessible, of equivalent or better quality and do not cause an unreasonable shortfall in provision. This development proposal includes provision of a Field Studies Centre with links to the Gilbert Whites Museum and Tap Room on the ground floor. It is noted in the submitted Ecosystem

Services Statement that the Field Studies Centre, as well as for education of school age children, will also be *'available for hire outside of traditional school/operating hours for the use of the local community'*. The Field Studies Centre provides a cultural and education facility, an alternative type of community infrastructure facility as per paragraph **7.227**.

- The Tap Room has links with the historic use of the building as a public house. Both of these facilities make educational, tourism, cultural, heritage and land-use enterprise/economy connections with the area, contributing to the **PMP outcomes** listed above. These provisions also contribute to meeting the requirements of Policy **SD34, (a) and (c)** in particular.
- As noted above, the Queens first floor was previously used to provide visitor accommodation in the form of four en suite letting bedrooms. Provision of visitor accommodation is recognised as an important part of sustainable tourism which can contribute to the local economy and to meeting the second purpose of the National Park in the evidence base for the Local Plan and is reflected in the introductory text of Policy **SD23**, and in the **South Downs Sustainable Tourism Strategy**<sup>1</sup>. Across the National Park there is generally recognised to be lack of sufficient hotel-style accommodation. Selborne is a popular location for tourist visitors and a lack of sufficient hotel style visitor accommodation here is noted. Policy **SD23(2)** resists the loss of visitor accommodation subject to viability, marketing or harmful impacts on special qualities; however, this development proposal makes provision for an alternative style of visitor accommodation in the form of 5no. 'Aparthotel Suites' (Use Class C1). These provide a hybrid hotel and self-catering style visitor accommodation which makes a contribution to meeting the visitor accommodation provision needs of the National Park and the **PMP outcomes**.
- I draw attention to the requirements of **SD23(1)** for visitor accommodation (the Aparthotel Suites) and for visitor attractions/recreational facilities (the Field Studies Centre Tap Room). The Field Studies Centre and links with Gilbert Whites Museum are relevant for criteria **SD23(1)(a)**. When considering the design of these proposals, criteria **SD23(1)(b)(c), (d) and (e)** are particularly relevant when considering the historic environment of Selborne, the contribution of the Queens to Selborne and the impact on associated facilities such as car parking.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Sustainable-Tourism-Strategy-2015-20.pdf>