

Officer Report

Application No.	25/0007/FH
Site Address	THE SOUTHCLIFFE HOTEL, 22-26 THE LEAS, FOLKESTONE, CT20 2DY
Officer Name	Macey Douglas
Proposal	Part retrospective application for new roof finishes to front, top, side, rear sections of main roof and all pitched and flat roof dormers.

Recommendation

Report Number	RD-436674
Recommended Decision	Recommended to be Refused
Recommendation Date	28 February 2025

Report

Site

The Southcliffe Hotel, 22-26 The Leas, is a Grade II Listed Building and is located on the north side of the Leas, about midway between the war memorial and Clifton Crescent and close to the junction with Shakespeare Terrace.

The property was originally built as 5 townhouses in 1861 and was later converted into two separate hotels in the mid-1930s. In 1980 the two hotels merged into a single 68-bedroom hotel now known as The Southcliffe Hotel.

The building itself is finished in a light stuccoed render. When the building was originally listed it would have featured a Slate Roof. This has since been replaced with a fibre cement roof slate that is subject of the current application.

More broadly the Leas is characterised by a mix of traditional Victorian/Edwardian properties and contemporary post-war buildings of varying scales, styles, and designs. The buildings tend to be in either residential or hotel use and are in varying states of repair.

The site is within the Folkestone Leas & Bayle conservation area and the property is Grade II listed. The listing description reads:

1. 5281 The LEAS FOLKESTONE Nos 22 to 24 (consec) (Hotel Ambassador) No 25 (Southcliff) No 26 TR 2235 NW 5/198 27.11.74. II GV 2. A Mid C19 terrace. 4 storeys attics and basement stuccoed. Slate roof with 11 pedimented dormers, one of which is 3 light. Moulded dentilled eaves cornice. Mainly sash windows (11) with verticals only. Southcliff has a 3-light canted bay through all floors. Stringcourses between floors. 2nd floor windows have curved pediments above and moulded architraves. 1st floor cast iron balcony and Southcliffe retains its tent-shaped canopy and verandah,

1 left side Tuscan portico and double Tuscan portico. All the ground floors have rusticated 3-light canted bays, but the Hotel Ambassador has had its doorcase removed and a modern glazed porch inserted.

Nos 16 to 19 (consec) form a group with Nos 22 to 26 (consec), (Nos 16 and 17 being buildings of local interest).

Listing NGR: TR2245635598

Relevant Site History

24/0148/FH - Listed Building Consent for new roof finishes to front, top and side sections of main roof and replacement of dormer window surrounds. - Refused

24/0149/FH - New roof finishes to front, top and side sections of main roof and replacement of dormer window surrounds. – Refused

24/1043/FH - New roof finishes to front, top, side and rear sections of main roof and proposed repair/replacement to all pitched and flat roof dormers. – Refused

Reason: The proposed alterations, by reason of the use of inappropriate and unsympathetic materials (including fibre cement roof slates and uPVC window surrounds) would be harmful to the significance and special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. No public benefits would arise sufficient to outweigh these harms. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies HB1, & HB8 of the Places and Policies Local Plan and the advice of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

24/1044/FH - Listed Building Consent for new roof finishes to front, top, side and rear sections of main roof and proposed repair/replacement to all pitched and flat roof dormers. – Refused

Reason: The proposed alterations, by reason of the use of inappropriate and unsympathetic materials (including fibre cement roof slates and uPVC window surrounds) would be harmful to the significance and special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. No public benefits would arise sufficient to outweigh these harms. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies HB1, & HB8 of the Places and Policies Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

25/0005/FH- Listed Building Consent for part retrospective for new roof finishes to front, top, side, rear sections of main roof and all pitched and flat roof dormers.- Under consultation

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for new roof finishes to front, top, and side sections of the main roof.

The replacement tiles are to be 'Swispearl Westerland Slate', a fibre cement roof slate.

Works have already commenced on site and the majority of works have been completed.

Consultation Responses

Folkestone Town Council – Object to the proposed use of fibre cement slate and believe this should be natural slate.

Representations

Two representations have been received in support of the proposal but raise concern in the current appearance of the front amenity space.

One representation has been received objecting to the development based on the harm to the heritage asset.

Relevant Policies

Places and Policies Local Plan 2020: HB1, HB8

Core Strategy Review 2022

NPPG

Historic Environment

NPPF (2024)

Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the Historic Environment; Paras. 202-214

Chapter 16 of the NPPF requires the impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset to be considered and where potential harm is identified, the harm needs to be categorised as either "less than substantial harm" or "substantial harm". The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgement for the decision maker, but it also makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test.

The NPPF states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance, irrespective of how substantial or otherwise, that harm might be. Any harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Where a proposal would result in less than substantial harm, the NPPF requires that it is weighed against the public benefits of a proposal. Heritage benefits are a public benefit to consider in the weighing exercise.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the Listed Building or its setting or any special architectural or historic features it possesses.

Appraisal

Design, Visual Appearance, and Heritage Impact

The significance of this building is derived from its strong architectural presence, traditional materials and detailing which contributes to the immediate street scene and conservation area. The property is a grand building which contributes to the historic relevance of The Leas. The site is also within a designated Conservation Area, the significance of which derives from its historic and architectural importance.

The application site reads alongside the nearby Carlton Hotel, to the eastern side of Shakespeare terrace, which is also a Listed Building.

The previous application was for the replacement of the existing roof materials (which were a poor-quality composite tile that had been installed without permission) with the Swisspearl Westerland, fibre cement slate. These were not considered to be acceptable or appropriate within the context of a prominent listed building in the conservation area and therefore planning permission and listed building consent were refused.

The proposed fibre cement slate has not been altered since the previous application. The use of non-traditional materials has the potential to erode the significance of the listed building. It is considered that the installation of the fibre cement slate would result in harm to the significance of the Listed Building as the materials relate poorly to the historic character and special interest of the building.

Whilst it is acknowledged that composite tiles were already in place prior to the most recent works being undertaken, these were installed without planning permission or listed building consent and are therefore not lawful. In 1974, at the time of listing the entire roof of the building was slate. There is no time limit for enforcement of planning breaches in respect of listed buildings and therefore the Council would be able to seek removal of these inappropriate features/details.

It is acknowledged that the applicant has received pre-application advice relating to the proposed works where it was considered the use of composite tiles might be acceptable. However, given that this is informal advice and is not the formal view of the LPA, it is not considered that this is robust justification in itself to justify works that would be harmful to the special interest of a designated heritage asset.

Further to this a site visit has been undertaken as part of the assessment of the application where the quality of the installation of the roof was reviewed. Whilst concerns have been raised regarding the aesthetic appearance of the artificial slate, there are also concerns regarding the quality of its installation. There are gaps amongst tiles, tiles that are slipping or ill fitting. There are also concerns with the flashing installed as it appears to be a tape, then painted, which overlaps the windows or has bulged in other areas. This can be seen in the images below. Given the poor quality of the workmanship undertaken this is considered to exacerbate the harm caused.





Paragraph 206 of the NPPF states that any harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Where a proposal would result in less than substantial harm, as is the case here, the NPPF requires that it is balanced against the public benefits of a proposal in the manner described in paragraph 208. Heritage benefits are a public benefit to consider in the balancing exercise. In this case it is considered that whilst this building is used as a hotel and an argument could be advanced regarding the benefit of retaining such tourist accommodation, in the absence of compelling justification demonstrating that the use of these materials is intrinsic to any continued use as a hotel, this is not sufficient to outweigh the harm to the heritage asset. No other public benefits have been identified.

For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposed development is unacceptable, contrary to Local Plan Policy HB1 and HB8 and chapter 16 of the NPPF.

Residential Amenity

There would be no unacceptable impact on the residents of the other flats and buildings in the area as a result of these works.

Highways

There would be no unacceptable impact upon highway safety or the existing off-street parking and would therefore be acceptable.

Other Matters

Concerns have been raised regarding the appearance of the front amenity space. This however is not a material consideration of the current application and therefore has no weight in its determination.

Human Rights

I have also taken into account the human rights issues relevant to this application. In my view, the Assessment section above and the recommendation represents an appropriate balance between the interests and rights of the applicant (to enjoy his land subject only to reasonable and proportionate controls by a public authority) [and the interests and rights of those potentially affected by the proposal (to respect for private life and the home and peaceful enjoyment of their properties)] and the wider public interest.

Public Sector Equality Duty

In determining this application, regard has been had to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set down in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in particular with regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. It is considered that the application proposals would not undermine objectives of the Duty.

Duty to Cooperate

In accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 the Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. We work with applicants/agents in a positive and creative way by offering a pre-application advice service and, where possible, suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome and as appropriate, updating applicants / agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application. In this instance the proposal was considered to be fundamentally contrary to policy such that a revised application would be required.

Recommendation

In light of the above, it is considered that planning permission should be refused.

Recommended Refusal Reasons (1)

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The use of non-traditional and inappropriate roofing tiles, in combination with their installation, results in an incongruous and poorly implemented development, significantly harmful to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, giving rise to harm to its significance as a designated heritage asset, and which fails to preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area, giving rise harm to its significance as a designated heritage asset. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies HB1 and HB8 of the Places and Policies Local Plan 2020 and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

Suggested Informatives (1)

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Your attention is drawn to the fact that this refusal of Planning Permission is on the basis of submitted documents:

P0500 Rev 2 Location & Site Plan (Existing) - received 09/01/2025

P0600 Rev 3 Location & Block Plan (Retrospective Proposed) - received 09/01/2025

P2010 - Rev 2 Roof plans (Retrospective Proposed) - received 03/01/2025

P2710 - Rev 2 Perspective Views (Retrospective Proposed) - received
03/01/2025

P2110 - Rev 2 Elevations (Retrospective Proposed) - received 03/01/2025

468_DAS_01 Design and Access Statement - received 22/01/2025

Heritage Statement - received 03/01/2025