

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>9 December 2021</b>
By	<b>Director of Planning</b>
Local Authority	<b>Wealden District Council</b>
Application Number	<b>SDNP/21/05072/ADV</b>
Applicant	<b>South Downs National Park Authority</b>
Application	<b>Installation of a suite of branded arrival signage</b>
Address	<b>Seven Sisters Country Park, East Dean Road, Exceat BN25 4AD</b>

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**Recommendation: That advertisement consent be granted subject to the conditions set out in 10.1 of the report.**

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**Site Location Map**



**NB magenta circles denote new sign locations. Signs circled in orange denote new signs; all others are direct replacements of existing signs**  
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## **Executive Summary**

- The application proposes the erection of 10 new signs to improve visitor orientation;
- No concerns have been raised by the Parish Council or third parties and the proposals are considered to be acceptable in terms of effects on amenity and public safety;
- The scheme is brought before Members due the application being made by the SDNPA;
- A concurrent application for listed building consent SDNP/21/05703/LIS for one of the signs that is subject of this application, which is proposed to be affixed to the wall of one of the listed buildings, is before Members on the same committee agenda.

### **1. Site Description**

- 1.1 The Seven Sisters Country Park visitor centre is based at Exceat, a traditional farmstead building cluster located on the east side of the valley of Cuckmere River located approximately 0.5km west of the village of Westdean.
- 1.2 The Exceat Farmhouse and two associated barns are all Grade II listed buildings. The buildings were recently granted permission for various works as part of Phase I of the SDNPA's refurbishment works. There is also a Grade II listed K6 telephone kiosk located on the southern side of the A286 at the entrance to the Southern Sisters car park.
- 1.3 The site is not located in any Area of Special Control of Advertisements (where a stricter degree of advertisement control is justified to conserve the visual amenity of identifiably significant features.)

### **2. Relevant Planning History**

- SDNP/20/02124/FUL Seven Sisters Country Park Phase I Proposals: Exceat - Additional toilet facilities, and improvement to existing facilities - Improvements to pedestrian and vehicular access - minor internal alterations within Visitor Centre building (Grade II Listed) and Dairy Barn to provide additional office accommodation; Improvements to the public realm to enhance the farmstead character of Exceat; Foxhole Camping Barn - Extension of facilities block; 1-3 Foxhole Cottages - erection of extensions and subdivision of Cottages to create 4 residential units (consisting of 1 unit of warden accommodation and 3 holiday lets). Approved 16.10.2020
- SDNP/20/02244/LIS Internal alterations to existing toilet block, workshop, ranger office, dairy barn and visitor centre to facilitate increased accessibility to visitor centre, additional toilets, confectionery outlet and office space. Replacement of existing glazed door in Visitor Centre and installation of doors in existing toilet block. Approved 16.10.2020
- SDNP/21/03062/FUL & SDNP/21/03063/LIS Insertion of wood-burning stove and metal flue to the Visitors Centre. Approved 31.08.2021
- A concurrent application for listed building consent for sign TS01 is being considered by the committee (item 11 on the agenda) under application SDNP/21/05703/LIS.

### **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 The application seeks to provide a suite of new arrival signage at the Seven Sisters Visitor Centre in order to create a sense of arrival, improve waymarking and visitor orientation, and visually reflect the SDNP Shared Identity and existing boundary signage. The site is split by the busy A259, and there is currently a lack of coherence between the northern and southern parts of the site. The location of the visitor centre is also unclear for visitors particularly when arriving from the southern Seven Sisters car park.
- 3.2 There would be ten new signs in total, the majority of which would be located within the setting of the three grade II listed buildings and the K6 telephone kiosk. Six freestanding arrival and carpark entry signs, and the sculptural arrival sign would be constructed from corten with aluminium frames. There would also be two wooden freestanding way markers, and a powder coated aluminium directional sign located on the south western elevation of the visitor centre building. Where relevant, signs requiring passive safety measures will be

constructed using Optimast 127 aluminium posts to reduce impact resistance. Details of the signs are summarised below:

Ref.	Material	Function	Size	Proposed Location
PA01	Corten/ Aluminium	Arrival Sign	2m(w) x 2.73(h)	West of the bus stop, behind wall on Littlington Road (replacement sign)
PA02	Corten/ Aluminium	Arrival Sign	2m(w) x 2.28(h)	East of East Dean Road, behind wall (replacement sign)
PA03	Corten/ Aluminium	Sculptural Arrival Sign	2.8m(w) x 2m(h)	On gabion flint wall within grassed area in front of visitor centre buildings (new sign)
PA04	Corten/ Aluminium	Car Park Entry Sign	1.5m (w) 2.18m(h)	West of 'Friston' north car park entrance (replacement sign)
PA05	Corten/ Aluminium	Car Park Entry Sign	1.5m (w) 2.18m(h)	East of 'Friston' north car park entrance (replacement sign)
PA06	Corten/ Aluminium	Car Park Entry Sign	1.5m (w) 2.18m(h)	West of southern 'Seven Sisters' car park entrance (replacement sign)
PA07	Corten/ Aluminium	Car Park Entry Sign	1.5m(w) 2.18m(h)	East of southern 'Seven Sisters' car park entrance (replacement sign)
FW19	Wooden Post	Directional Way Marker	0.4m(h)	Entrance of southern 'Seven Sisters' car park (replacement sign)
FW20	Wooden Post	Directional Way Marker	0.4m(h)	Pedestrian entrance to the east of the bus stop (replacement sign)
TS01	Powder coated Aluminium	Information Way Marker	0.67m(w) 0.4m(h)	Affixed to south-western elevation of listed building (new sign)

#### 4. Consultations

4.1 **Cuckmere Parish Council:** No objection.

4.2 **ESCC Highway Authority:** No objection.

4.3 **Historic Buildings:** No objection.

#### 5. Representations

5.1 None received.

#### 6. Planning Policy Context

##### National Policy and Legislation

6.1 As the application is for advertisement consent, the relevant legislation is the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations (Advertisement Regulations) (2007) (as amended). The advertisement regime is further explained in the National Planning Policy Guidance (updated 2019). The Advertisement Regulations (2007) only allows the Local Planning Authority to control the display of advertisements in the interest of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan insofar as they are material, and any other relevant factors.

6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) is considered holistically although the following sections are of particular relevance to the applications:

- Section 12: Achieving well-designed places

- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6.3 Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021). The Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection, and the NPPF states at paragraph 172 that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in national parks and that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations and should be given great weight in National Parks.

#### National Park Purposes

6.4 The two statutory purposes of the SDNP designation are:

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

6.5 If there is a conflict between these two purposes, Purpose 1 has greater weight. There is also a duty upon the Local Planning Authority to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

### **7. Planning Policy**

7.1 The following policies of the South Downs Local Plan are of particular relevance:

- SD5 Design
- SD13 Listed Buildings
- SD21 Public Realm, Highway Design and Public Art
- SD53 Advertisements.

#### Statutory Requirements

7.2 Section 16 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses when considering whether to grant listed building consent.

### **8. Planning Assessment**

8.1 As set out in Paragraph 136 of the NPPF, the consent process within the planning system controlling the display of advertisements, should be operated in a way that is “simple, efficient and effective.”

#### Effects on Amenity

8.2 The Advertisement Regulations (2007) set out the factors relevant to the consideration of amenity, which include the general characteristics of the locality, and the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest. National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) (2019) states that the assessment of amenity should consider whether advertisements are in scale and in keeping with any features of interest.

8.3 The key development plan policies are SD5, SD13, SD21 and SD53. SD5 and SD13 require development to be of a design that is appropriate and sympathetic to its setting in terms of materials and vernacular detailing; and preserve and enhance the significance of listed buildings and their setting. SD21 requires street design to be context-sensitive, responding to the specific character, activities, heritage, built form and layout, materials and street furniture of the location. SD53 states that advertisement consent will be granted where:

- a) The location, size, scale, proportions, design and materials of the advert respects the character and appearance of the site and area; and
- b) The number of adverts is kept to a minimum to ensure that there is no harmful

cumulative impact on the amenity of the area.

- 8.4 Paragraph 136 of the NPPF also states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed, and that cumulative impacts should be considered.
- 8.5 In this case, a total of 10 No signs are proposed in roadside and carpark locations in close proximity to a cluster of listed buildings, with one sign being affixed to the south-western elevation of the listed visitor centre. Amenity considerations should therefore include the consideration of potential impacts on landscape character and the listed buildings and their setting, as well as cumulative impacts.
- 8.6 The application sets out that the number of signs proposed is the minimum to achieve safe orientation of visitors arriving from the Seven Sisters and Friston car parks. The majority are replacements of existing signs that are of a similar size and scale to the wooden signs and posts being replaced, and in the same or a similar location. Only two of the signs are new, such that cumulative impacts are considered to be minor. The only new signs would be the 'sculptural arrival' sign PA03, located on the grassed area in front of the listed barn, and TS01 which is a small directional sign that would be affixed to the south-western elevation of the listed building. As such, cumulative impacts are considered to be minor.
- 8.7 The majority of the signs will be constructed from corten (or corten powder coated aluminium in the case of TS01) in the style of the existing National Park boundary markers, and will have a simpler, less cluttered appearance than the existing wooden signs. In general design terms, the new suite of signs would therefore be an improvement over those existing. The corten-effect finish will have a rusted appearance that reflects the site's historic agricultural vernacular, and the character of the signage throughout the remainder of the site. Collectively, the signs would also introduce a new sense of place that reflects the broader rural landscape character of the national park, and will raise public awareness of the Seven Sisters visitor centre as being an important feature within the National Park. As such, the signs would conserve and enhance the rural character and appearance of the site.
- 8.8 The Historic Buildings officer has advised that the design and location signs would not negatively impact on the grade II listed barns, the K6 phone kiosk or Exceat farmhouse, or cause harm to their setting. As such, the signs would be in scale and in keeping with features of historic and cultural interest.
- 8.9 In summary, the proposed signs would respect the character and appearance of the site, and would be of an appropriate and sympathetic design that would preserve and enhance the significance of the listed buildings and their setting. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with policies SD5, SD13, SD21 and SD53, and acceptable in terms of effects on amenity.

#### Effects on Public Safety

- 8.10 The Advertisement Regulations (2007) set out the factors relevant to the consideration of public safety, which include:
- i) The safety of persons using any highway;
  - ii) Whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign.
- 8.11 Policy SD21 requires development to be designed to protect the safety and amenity of all road users, and provide safe and legible movement through the site. Criterion c) of policy SD53 states that advertisement consent will be granted where there is no harmful impact to public safety. Paragraph 136 of the NPPF also states that cumulative impacts are relevant to the interests of public safety.
- 8.12 The application is supported by a Passive Safety Report (Russell & Havard Consultants, Oct 2021), which considers windloading (i.e. ability to withstand wind action) and passive safety requirements (i.e. level of impact resistance), which are dependent on the signs' various locations.
- 8.13 As noted above, the majority of the new signs are replacements of existing signs, with only

two being new. As such cumulative impacts are considered to be minor in terms of public safety considerations.

- 8.14 The ESCC Highway Authority has considered the location of the signs and Passive Safety Report, and revisions have made to the siting and design of signs PS03 and TS01 in accordance with recommendations made are considered acceptable.
- 8.15 The design of the signs requires a bespoke 'Optimast' mounting approach, which has been used on the existing SDNP boundary signage. This differs from standard passive safety design due to the sign mounting height of 1.8m, which is higher than the standard 1.5m. However, the Optimast system has met the relevant safety testing requirements, and ESCC Highway Authority is satisfied that the mounting approach is acceptable in terms of public safety.
- 8.16 In summary, the proposed signs would protect the safety and amenity of all road users, and would not have a harmful impact on public safety. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with policies SD21 and SD53, and acceptable in terms of effects on public safety.

#### Other matters

- 8.17 Policies SD2 and SD9 requires proposal to have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services.
- 8.18 In this case, the sculptural arrival sign PA03 is located in an area of semi-improved grassland secured for enhancement as chalk grassland habitat under permission SDNP/20/02124/FUL. The sign will be fixed using ground screws, around which a flint filled gabion cage would be provided. This will ensure a minimal land demise of less than 1sqm (0.3m x 2.9m), and will allow the opportunity for grasses and other species to colonise between the flints on both sides of the base.
- 8.19 This is considered to be an acceptable approach as it is unlikely to result in an overall loss of habitat, and would not impact the ability of permission SDNP/20/02124/FUL to comply with SD2 and SD9.

### **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1 Given the above it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of amenity and public safety. It is therefore recommended that advertisement consent be granted for all ten signs.

### **10. Recommendation and Conditions**

- 10.1 It is recommended that advertisement consent be granted subject to the following conditions:

#### General Conditions

1. The period of consent lapses at the expiration of five years from the date of issue.  
Reason: To comply with Regulation 14(7) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations (2007) (as amended.) Any advertisement may continue to be displayed after this date, subject to the same conditions as set out in the Consent and the power of the Local Planning Authority to require discontinuance of the display under Regulation 8.
2. The consent shall be implemented in accordance with the plans listed below under the heading "Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application."  
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

#### Standard Conditions (as required by the Advertisement Regulations)

3. No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.  
Reason: To comply with Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations (2007) (as amended.)

4. No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to
  - a) Endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
  - b) Obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
  - c) Hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

Reason: To comply with Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations (2007) (as amended.)

5. Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

Reason: To comply with Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations (2007) (as amended.)

6. Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

Reason: To comply with Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations (2007) (as amended.)

7. Where an advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

Reason: To comply with Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations (2007) (as amended.)

#### Informatives

1. The applicant will need to apply for a license from ESCC Highways for all signs falling within the limit of the public highway.

### **11. Crime and Disorder Implication**

- 11.1 It is considered that the proposal does not raise any crime and disorder implications.

### **12. Human Rights Implications**

- 12.1 This planning application has been considered in light of statute and case law and any interference with an individual's human rights is considered to be proportionate to the aims sought to be realised.

### **13. Equality Act 2010**

- 13.1 Due regard has been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010.

### **14. Proactive Working**

- 14.1 In reaching this decision the South Downs National Park Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the NPPF. This has included the provision of pre-application advice and seeking amendments during the determination of the applications to ensure that the development brought forward conserves and enhances the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.

### **TIM SLANEY**

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Background Documents

[All planning application plans, supporting documents, consultation and third party responses](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework \(2021\)](#)

[National Planning Policy Guidance \(2019\) Advertisements](#)

[South Downs Local Plan \(2014-33\)](#)

[The Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

