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Sent: 19 May 2021 17:48
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Subject: FW: BR/120/21/PL

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The Royal Hotel, The Esplanade, Bognor Regis, PO21 1SZ

Variation of condition 2 imposed under BR/257/20/PL relating to approved plans.

The Royal Hotel is located on the Esplanade, and fronts on to the promenade and the beach beyond it. The original building comprises an imposing five storey (including lower ground level) Victorian rendered building with detailed quoining and cornicing. It has recently been refurbished as part of a scheme of conversion from hotel to residential. It is a very attractive building which plays a prominent role on the sea front and has been identified by the District Council as a Locally Listed Building or Structure of Character. As such it is a non-designated heritage asset.

The building is located within the 'Bognor Regis: The Steyne' Conservation Area. Located at the junction between The Steyne and the Esplanade it forms a focal point when travelling along the esplanade road. The Esplanade has been the location for some of the larger buildings in the local area including the Royal Norfolk, and the now lost Beach Hotel. The Royal Hotel building is located roughly mid-way between the two aforementioned properties.

The Steyne forms a separate character area within the conservation area. It is an open-ended rectangle at right angles to the sea, lined with two and three storey terraced houses with bay windows and balconies.

Further, there are a number of other Locally Listed Building or Structures of Character, and Nationally identified Listed Buildings in the immediate area, all of which contribute to the established character of the conservation area and this part of the town.

The Proposal

The building has been the subject of a number of applications in the last few years in order to convert it to a mixed residential/restaurant use. This has also required extensive alterations to be made to it in order to successfully accommodate those uses. The current application seek permission for yet more changes to the appearance and layout of the building, especially that part of the building which was formerly used as a night club.

The Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement helpfully identifies the following alterations to the previously approved plans:

- a) Restaurant entry relocated to south elevation
- b) Amended glazing to restaurant south & west elevations
- c) Additional balcony area to first floor apartment where roofline altered
- d) Apartment lobby entrance relocated from rear to west elevation
- e) Amendments to location & quantity of doors accessing the restaurant from the rear

The relocation of the Restaurant entry to the south elevation is incorporated as part of what appears to be a revised design to the restaurant, where a small terrace area will now form part of the internal floor space. Further alterations are proposed at the lower ground floor level which incorporates a substantial amount of additional glazing which would be out of character with the existing, traditional building.

The additional balcony area would include a large area of glass screening which, when viewed alongside the additional large area of glazing beneath would start to dominate the front elevation of the building. The area covered by the balcony is also much larger than both the other ones in the building and the local area. It would also be exposed and clearly visible to the surrounding public realm. Further, there would be no ability to control how such a space is used, which could become visually cluttered with those elements associated with external private space. This would not be a positive feature of the building, and it is therefore considered to be harmful and out of character.

The amendments which relocate the Apartment lobby entrance from the rear to west elevation as well as the amendments to the location and quantity of doors accessing the restaurant from the rear is of no real concern. This is subject to the doors replicating those already approved.

Conclusion

Therefore, on balance, I am of the opinion that the impact of the proposal can be described as causing less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019). As such, you will also need to consider the public benefits that the development may achieve as part of your assessment of the application, along with the contents of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

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