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Sent: 02 April 2020 13:48
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Subject: BR/282/19/PL

BR/282/19/PL

The property is located within The Steyne and Waterloo Square Conservation Area. A description of the conservation areas is provided in a Supplementary Planning Guidance Note. It is not repeated here. However, the contents of that description should also be taken into consideration as part of the determination of this application.

There are several listed and locally listed buildings in the immediate and wider area which contribute to the character and appearance of the area.

As part of paragraph 189 of the NPPF, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected as part of their proposals, including any contribution made by their setting, in determining applications (in this case the heritage assets mentioned previously). A heritage statement has been provided as part of the application which has been reviewed and informed these comments.

The Site and its Surroundings

The site fronts on to roads on three sides: the western side on to Waterloo Square, the southern on to the Esplanade, and the eastern on to Norfolk Street.

Waterloo Square consists of a large open space which was intended to protect views from Richard Hotham's Fitzleet House. Whilst this particular property has been demolished, the open space remains an important reminder of it. It also forms an important area of open space within the urban area.

Typical of seaside resorts, this open central space is flanked by nearly continuous, street fronted development. Whilst there is a variety in the age and style of the buildings, they are modest in scale being mostly 2/3 storeys high. There is also continuity with the majority of the older buildings being rendered and painted. A visible building line is also present to both sides of the square which informs a uniform character to the area.

Remnants from the early development of the Square exist in Nos. 7 – 17 Waterloo Square, they are reminders of a development of a fine, formal group of buildings in a Regency style dating from 1815 - 1820. The square sits at a right angle to the esplanade road and is linked to the seafront. It is visible from the Esplanade and forms a focal point when traveling along it.

Other buildings of note include the pier, which is a grade II Listed Building. It is built of iron posts with wooden decking and cast-iron railings. Roughcast pavilions are present at shore end with roofs of slate, roofing felt, and felt tiles. There is an arcade facing the promenade which is of two storeys with hipped roof. On the first floor is a central round headed pediment with round headed window flanked by ornate pilasters with swags. This application site can be viewed in the context of the pier when seen from the esplanade.

Whilst there has been some modern development it generally respects the established character of the area. The only building in this side of the square which is contrast to the established character is the Methodist church. This building is a bricked structure which somewhat stands out and can be easily identified as a place of worship.

Due to the location of the square adjacent to the seafront, and the presence of the pier and the 'crazy golf', the local area becomes one that has a tourist function where there is a continuous presence of people during the summer months.

Norfolk Street is typical of the several small service streets or roads in the area. Its scale contrasts with the large, formal space of the main square. Development here is mostly small scale, two storied properties which front on to the carriageway.

The site itself is a fairly large plot for this type of location and was previously occupied by three buildings. Further, it is a fairly prominent location on the corner of Waterloo square and the esplanade. As such it can be seen from different vantage points.

The previous development

It is worth noting some details of the previous buildings on this application site, as it helps to provide some context. The application site consisted of three properties; 2 and 4 Waterloo square and the former mud club building. All of the historic properties have now been demolished.

These buildings were predominantly 3/4 storeys on both the western and southern elevations, and lower on the Norfolk road elevation. They were also of a design that meant that they complimented the established mix of styles in the conservation area.

Whilst the loss of the buildings is unfortunate, and has harmed the conservation area, it is considered that there is now the opportunity for new development to enhance it so that something positive can be achieved.

Due to the complex nature of the site, it is considered that any proposals require careful consideration.

The Current Proposed Development

As the site is highly visible in a strategic location which forms a gateway to Waterloo Square and what is described as 'The Old Town', a considered approach is required to ensure that any new development is in keeping with the scale, proportion and treatment of existing buildings in the conservation area (especially this part), and does no harm in accordance with the relevant legislation. Further, it should not harm the nearby heritage assets.

It is positive to note that the proposal maintains the existing building line along Waterloo Square and the Esplanade. Further the retention of a ground floor retail/commercial element around the junction with the esplanade can be

supported as it will maintain the previous use of part of the site and encourage visitors into this part of the town. Although, whilst the proposal maintains a dual aspect with ground floor restaurant uses facing on to Waterloo Square and the Esplanade, it is a shame that the opportunity to enhance the Norfolk Street elevation is missed.

However, whilst some positive elements can be identified for the scheme, it is also considered that some elements of the proposal are problematical, most notably the height/massing of the building. The proposal, at up to 7 floors high, is double the tallest structure in this part of the conservation area, or in fact, the previous (now demolished) building on the application site. It would dominate the existing neighbouring buildings (especially in Waterloo Square).

It is also apparent from reviewing the proposed elevations, that whilst the new building attempts to integrate with neighbouring buildings in the square, there remains a significant variation in height from 7 to 3 floors. Such a large difference in height gives the impression of dwarfing the neighbouring buildings.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the proposed scheme (of one larger building) represents the replacement of three different buildings that maintained the proportion of other property frontages within the Square, whilst also complementing the mix of styles within the conservation area.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposal will have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area and surrounding heritage assets.

Conclusion

The proposal is such that the impact can be described as causing substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 195 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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