

Design Review

Site: 2 – 4 Waterloo Square, Bognor Regis (Rev. B)
Status: Full Planning Application
Reference: BR/282/19/PL
By: D. Edwards
Date: 29th April, 2020

- 1) In the first instance, it is clear that the Applicant has sought to develop the proposed scheme in relation to previous comments and as a result, this incorporates a number of improvements:
 - a) More spacious accommodation.
 - b) More articulate elevations that seek to balance contemporary and traditional forms and materials.
 - c) Increase in permeable ground floor area.
 - d) Reduced height.
- 2) There remain some design concerns with regard to the following aspects:
 - a) Expansive blank facades towards the open space – it is appreciated that windows have probably been removed for privacy but at present, there is no passive surveillance if this were to become public realm while the blank facades would be visible from The Esplanade and Waterloo Square.
 - b) Fire safety with each building now relying on one form of escape.
 - c) Interface with Waterloo Court, particularly the existing pitched roof and the proposed wall.
- 3) While a green roof is no longer proposed, it is envisaged this would be offset by the increase in ground floor permeable area.
- 4) It is also clear that some consideration has been applied to relate to neighbouring buildings, frame a view of the pier and retain a sense of enclosure around the corner of Waterloo Square and The Esplanade.
- 5) Additionally, the character area description of the 'jostling vitality' of the wider locale is considered to allow some tolerance for building design.
- 6) However, a prominent site at a sensitive and strategic location, the main consideration remains the integration with the wider conservation area. Or, conversely, the impact of proposed development on surrounding heritage assets.
- 7) In this respect, the proposed scale and massing is still considered to be excessive – 50% higher than neighbouring buildings on both sides:
 - a) Five proposed floors alongside three existing at Waterloo Square.
 - b) Six proposed floors alongside four existing at The Esplanade.
- 8) This is particularly significant when the proposed scheme is considered in relation to the wider Waterloo Square street frontage and apparent from the proposed rear elevation.

- 9) It is understood that separating the proposed mass into two separate elements seeks to relate to the different volumes of the three former buildings.
- 10) However, the principal concern is not the horizontal massing (the original buildings provided a continuous frontage and sense of enclosure around the square) but vertically. Specifically, the extent of variation between proposed and existing eaves and ridge/ roof lines.
- 11) It should again be emphasised that under different conditions, this might not be so significant. However, in this particular instance, the square, its frontage and the pier represent a composition that creates a particular sense of place for Bognor Regis in relation to other seaside towns.
- 12) Ultimately, the site represents a unique opportunity to repair the urban fabric and enhance the conservation area and heritage assets and it would be very interesting to see the impact of a scheme that sensitively integrates with the scale and proportion of neighbouring buildings as the basis for achieving this.