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Subject: BR/73/19/PL

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This current application is for a terrace of three houses on the grounds of the former tennis court for the adjoining hotel.

The site is part of the former tennis court to the Royal Norfolk (a listed building) and is located within the Waterloo Square and the Steyne conservation area. It fronts on to West Street. Further, there are a number of listed and locally listed buildings in the local area.

I note that a heritage impact assessment has been provided, which is helpful. However, it makes references to the NPPF 2012, which has been superseded, as well to a terrace of four dwellings; the proposal is currently for three dwellings. However, information has been provided in accordance with paragraph of the NPPF 2019. I provide my comments as follows.

The Royal Norfolk Hotel is a landmark building within the conservation area and occupies a prominent position along the sea-front. It is an important reminder of the historical development of the seaside resort. It is dated to the 1840s, and is a Grade II Listed Hotel, which has been extended on a few occasions.

It has an imposing elongated facade, set back diagonally to the corner with West Street. It is 3 storeys, and stuccoed. It has a drafted ground floor and drafted pilasters between windows, which have sashes without glazing bars. 1st floor windows have pediments on brackets (the middle 3 segmental). A stringcourse connects the cills of 2nd floor windows. Free-standing royal arms with supportors in centre, over low parapet. The cornice supported on elongated brackets, rhythmically spaced.

There is a balcony to the 7 centre bays, with iron columns and delicate iron railings. A projecting porch is present on the front elevation. It is noted that there is an irregular rear.

The hotel has an open setting, which consists mostly of extensive lawns to the front of the building, along with an enclosed area to the eastern side. Both of these areas contribute to the building's prominence within the local area. Further, this area forms one of a handful of open spaces within the conservation area.

The concept of development within the grounds of the hotel has already been considered suitable with residential development taking place in 2007. Such existing development is of a scale as not to be overly visible from the street.

As previously acknowledged, the spacious surroundings allow the side elevation of the hotel to be viewed, along with the principal elevation. This contrasts with the denser development within other parts of the conservation area.

The application site is roughly square in shape and located to the eastern side of the hotel building. At the present time it is a vacant plot of land enclosed by a close-boarded fence and hedge. Whilst the site appears to be in an unkempt state, the nature of the sites means that it still contributes to the open character of this part of West Street. It is therefore still an important feature of the plot and local area. The fact that the site is in separate ownership does not affect this element at all.

The development of this particular piece of land could lead to the loss of the open space to the east of the hotel and would harm the character of the conservation area. It would also cause harm if it would restrict views of the side elevation of the hotel.

It is considered that the existing hedging contributes to the setting of the listed building and could form part of the proposed scheme. In particular, I am thinking of the western boundary of the site which provides enclosure for the parking area.

Existing properties within the local area appear to be predominantly terraced. These terraced dwellings vary in terms of age, design, and height. The relationship between the open spaces within the conservation area and the surrounding built development is intrinsic to its character. In the Steyne, the dwellings are arranged around a rectangular open space at right angles to the sea, whilst Waterloo Square is arranged around a landscaped space fronting onto the sea front.

The proposed terrace would continue development further towards the seafront in a location which does not appear to have had development before. Further, it could erode the space around the listed building, and harm the established character of the area.

The terrace of houses would be located in close proximity to the listed building and even with the hedge screening on the southern boundary could be read in the context of the listed building. If well designed so that the development closely relates to the surrounding buildings in terms of design and materials, the impact of the proposal could be reduced. This would require traditional materials and design features to be an integral part of the design of the buildings. For instance, wooden sliding sash windows etc. at present, there is not enough information provided to ensure that this would be incorporated into any final scheme.

Having considered the proposal it is considered that it is such that the impact can be described as causing less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2018). 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 section 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

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