

Arun District Council, Civic Centre, Maltravers Rd, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LF

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From: Martyn White <Martyn.White@arun.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 February 2022 17:41
To: Planning.Responses <Planning.Responses@arun.gov.uk>
Subject: LU/13/22/PL

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Pharos Quay River Road Littlehampton BN17 5BF

Alterations to fenestration and openings. (This application may affect the character and appearance of the Littlehampton (River Road) Conservation Area and a Listed Building).

The application site is located within the River Road Conservation Area. This is situated to the west of Littlehampton town centre and runs parallel to the River Arun. River Road was developed in a number of stages during the first half of the 19th Century. At the Surrey Street end the buildings as far as Hampton Court were originally known as Seaview. This section contains all the Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area which were originally occupied by town dignitaries and those who had an interest in the sea and seafaring. These buildings are two- and three-storey town houses dating from the early and mid-19th Century built as semi-detached houses or in short blocks.

A second distinct area to the west of Hampton Court and along lengths of Purbeck Place and Terminus Place can be identified. These buildings are smaller than those to the east. Part of this section was originally known as Ferry Row and dates from the 1830s, soon after the chain ferry across the River Arun came into operation.

The final area includes some of the remaining 19th Century riverside buildings and those fronting Terminus Road which reflect the growth of the harbour at that period. The application is located within this section of the conservation area.

There are also a number of Locally Listed Buildings or Structures of Character around Pharos Quay such as The Steam Packet Public House, 49 River Road and 21-25 Terminus Road. All of these buildings collectively contribute towards the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The Proposal

A review of the heritage statement has identified that the proposal relates to the following works:

- Replacement of existing timber casements windows with white PVCu of a similar style.
- Replacement of all entrance doors and glazed side screens with white PVCu frame and composite doors.
- Replacement of aluminium sliding patio doors with new white PVCu sliding patio doors.
- Existing timber roof bargeboards/soffit/fascias and exposed rafter feet to be replaced in white PVCu plastic.
- Replacement of timber doors and cladding to external bin stores with white PVCu doors and shiplap cladding.

The property itself consists of two buildings one fronting Terminus Road and the second fronting River Road. They are of fairly modern in terms of its construction, predominantly 3 stories in height with a series of gabled roofs with brick elevations. They are prominent feature at the western end of the conservation area and its form, design and detailing attempts to reflect both the historic and modern buildings found locally. There a large number of wooden windows and sliding aluminium doors within the buildings. It is interesting to note that whilst the property was approved (on appeal) in 1991, that the heritage statement identifies that it has remained pretty much in its original appearance, despite the passage of some 30 years.

Windows are an important feature within a building, and their replacement should be carefully considered. It is suggested by the applicant that the replacement windows are of a similar appearance to the existing ones. The heritage statement identifies that the replacement doors, whether main entrance doors or sliding patio doors, will be renewed on a like-for-like basis with a wood grain effect PVCu composite doors. Likewise, it is identified that the plastic soffits and fascias will enclose the eaves.

It is considered that this proposal is problematic; UPVC windows are not a traditional or vernacular material and are unsuitable for use in historic buildings or in particularly sensitive areas such as conservation areas. Although designs have improved, faithful replication remains deficient in many areas. They are often less refined, and the size of the frame is of necessity usually larger than that of a traditional timber window giving an obtrusive and chunky appearance. Applied glazing bars are employed which are often too thick or sandwiched between the two layers of glass, and not detailed enough for historic buildings. Further, the visual effect of shiny modern plastic is out of keeping with more traditional materials.

I note that ease of maintenance is identified as a reason for undertaking the works. There is no denying that like all timber products, windows require regular maintenance. It is an on cost but should more than pay for itself by reducing the likelihood of decay. Should repairs become necessary it is normally feasible to undertake localised joinery repairs as opposed to completely replacing the units. Whilst UPVC are promoted as maintenance free, there has been problems of discolouration in the past, and the units do not readily lend themselves to repair, with often the only viable option being to replace them in their entirety.

I should also point out that UPVC windows are also unsustainable; the proven lifespan of upvc is much shorter and unlike wood is a non-renewable resource: It uses more energy to manufacture and dispose of.

Whilst it is unfortunate that the original windows were not vertically sliding sashes, it is suggested that this application offers the opportunity for them to be replaced with something more in keeping with the conservation area. This could either be vertically sliding painted timber sash windows or potentially an alternative material such as white powder coated aluminium sash windows which could provide more slender proportions, and which would have a far more appropriate opening mechanism than top hung sashes. This far more appropriate operating mechanism would go towards ameliorating, to some extent, the adverse impact of UPVC.

The buildings include traditional features such as the barge-boarding, slender eaves fascia's, and exposed rafter feet. These are important to the design of the buildings and ensure that they make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Heritage Statement indicates that it is proposed to both enclose (box in) the existing timber eaves and replace the timber bargeboards with UPVC fascias and soffits. The replacement features will most likely be bulky, visually clumsy and inappropriate components which would materially detract from the appearance and character of the buildings and the conservation area.

Conclusion

The proposal is such that the impact can be described as causing less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF (2021). 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).

Martyn White
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Please note: I work on Conservation for half of the working week (all day Monday and Friday and Tuesday Afternoons)

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