

Site:	The Nelson Hotel, 61 Pier Road, Littlehampton
Status:	Full Planning Application
App. No:	LU/324/18/PL
By:	D. Edwards
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Site:

1	Physical context:	• Waterfront location. • Dual aspect (south and west). • 600m from mainline train station. • Existing use as a hotel; close to tourism and hospitality activities. • Neighbouring 2 and 2.5 storey buildings.
2	Strategic context:	• Area of Special Character (South Terrace); <i>This part of the terrace consists of four properties and the Nelson Hotel PH. These buildings are two and a half storeys, and have very decorative barge boards and finials. The windows are vertically sliding sashes and the roof consists of plain clay tiles. The boundary walls comprise of flint and brick with piers bordering them.</i> • Close to conservation area (Littlehampton Seafront). • Flood Zone 3.
3	Planning Background:	Conditional approval (LU/84/17/PL); • Redevelopment of existing building. • Additional floor to provide three stories; new 2nd floor to be recessed from the building line to reduce visual impact. • Finished first floor levels +6.5m AOD (1.5m higher than the 1:200 flood level). • Rear and side extensions. • Increase in number of keys from 6 to 14. • Internal renovations. • Disabled access. • White render, grey doors and windows, grey cladding and glazing panels.
4	Key constraints:	• Varying height of neighbouring buildings. • High visual impact at the intersection of two significant roads (Pier Road and South Terrace).

		• Within an area of special character and close to a conservation area and heritage assets. • Flooding; all sleeping accommodation to be located at first floor (FFL not lower than 300mm above 4.94m AOD). • Private alley to the east.
5	Key opportunities:	• Prominent site with good natural light and views. • Renovation of currently disused business. • Enhance the special character area. • Consolidate street elevations along Pier Road and South Terrace.

Proposal:

1	Overview:	• Demolition of existing hotel to provide a new hotel with 14 keys. • Increase in plot coverage and a 21% increase in gross floor area. • Additional floor to provide a restaurant, bar and terrace.
2	Height:	4 floors/ 14.95m
3	Parking:	None proposed
4	Design intent:	• Striking elevations to increase awareness. • Maintain footprint and height of consented scheme. • Restaurant located on the corner to be further from neighbouring properties and maximise views and visibility. • Services to the rear. • Limited side openings to the east to maintain privacy of adjacent dwelling.

Response:

1.0	Comments and observations:
1.1	While maintaining the proposed number of keys as the 2017 consented scheme (14), an additional floor has been proposed to provide a roof terrace with a restaurant and bar.
1.2	Given the unique views presented by the site, in principle, a roof top terrace would be an attractive feature. However, quite significantly, the site's location within an area of special interest and close to a conservation area requires particular attention to the scale, character and proportion of neighbouring buildings to ensure that new development will be well integrated and have a minimal impact on heritage assets.
1.3	Proposed development seeks to follow the ridge height of the neighbouring buildings. To achieve this, four habitable floors are compressed into the same envelope as 2 and 2.5 storey buildings with pitched roofs. While the height is maintained, the scale and proportion of proposed development varies greatly to the terraces on each side and the approved scheme; the impact is apparent from proposed 'Render 1'. For instance,

	along Pier Road, the height of ground floor windows appears to be at eye level, approximately 1m lower than the door and window heights of neighbouring shops.
1.4	Through removing the external stair and extending further to the front and rear of the approved building line, the proposed footprint would almost occupy the full site. It is noted that the recessed ground floor and the roof terrace are intended to provide a degree of external area for guests. However, there is a concern that the rear courtyard will be insufficient for emergency access, storage, loading and servicing without spilling onto the private road.
1.5	By extending to the boundary on South Terrace, the proposed scheme involves the removal of a slight return in the existing building line. This return is quite significant – it creates a semi-private area for access and a widening to the private alley for visibility. Principally, it is also marries with the building line of South Terrace to open a long view from the end of Pier Road and create the impression of a gradual reduction in height to the waterfront when approaching from South Terrace.
1.6	Through following the angled corner of the existing extension rather than the historic building line, proposed development would partly obscure the long view of South Terrace while the increase in height and massing will be clearly visible when approaching from this direction. This impact of this is apparent from the submitted 'Render 3'.
1.7	Under different conditions, the proposed arrangement might be considered acceptable. However, the visual impact is particularly significant given that both terraces are important heritage assets.
1.8	It is noted that the approved scheme incorporated light grey cladding on the new second floor to reduce the perceived impact of the increase in height in a manner akin to a mansard roof. Beneath this, a white render was used to marry with the Pier Road streetscape. However, the current application uses cladding as the primary external material with varying tones and panel sizes to create a striking impression. While the composition of the elevations are interesting, in this particular context, a reduced visual effect that minimises impact on the conservation and special character areas would be more applicable.
1.8	The Pier Road elevation is characterised through strong horizontal elements (continuous ridge, window and shop frontage lines and in some cases, weatherboarding) and slightly cantilevered windows. While it is noted that the existing hotel deviates from this frontage with a gable end, it retains the cantilever window. The proposed scheme appears to acknowledge this through similar window volumes. However, there is an absence of depth in the elevation that is prevalent along Pier Road. The significant variation in floor level creates further distinction in an elevation that is characterised by continuity.
1.9	While the waterfront location supports a roof terrace with a bar and restaurant, there is a concern that the proposed height will have a greater visual and environmental impact on neighbouring homes and the conservation area, especially if this will have late opening hours.
1.10	Given that no on-site parking is proposed, the proposed cycle storage is welcomed.

	However, the scale of this appears to accommodate 2/ 3 bicycles and given the location of this between the fire escape and the private road, there is a concern that any clutter in the courtyard will negatively impact means of escape – particularly given the proposed increase in the number of keys and roof bar/ restaurant.
2.0	Overview:
2.1	The proposed scheme incorporates a number of interesting aspects; • Active frontages are maintained around the ground floor. • The challenge of a dual aspect is responded to though the proposed corner window volume and a recessed ground floor. • Retractable panels at ground floor increase interaction with the street while the slight recess presents an opportunity for external seating with good natural light. • The tones of proposed materials have been selected to reflect the wider built and natural context. • Balconies and terraces help to create depth in the elevation while maximising the unique light and views presented by the site.
2.2	Under different conditions, the proposed scheme might be perfectly acceptable. However, the site's prominent location in an area of special character and next to a conversation area requires particular consideration of the scale, proportion, massing and treatment of neighbouring buildings. In relation to all of these, the proposed scheme is a clear variation.
2.3	Partly, this relates to having reduced four habitable floors into the building envelope of 2/ 2.5 storey homes. As a result, there is no continuity with the street elevations of South Terrace and Pier Road.
2.4	While the consented scheme adopted a varying building style to the traditional pitched roofs and gable ends of the wider area, significantly, the existing building maintains the floor and window height of the neighbouring buildings. This is particularly significant given the highly visible location of the site and the need to knit together two important street frontages.
2.5	The impact of the proposed building mass is compounded by almost filling the extent of the plot. By extending beyond the existing building line, proposed development impacts long views from the end of Pier Road and South Terrace.
2.6	It has been noted that cladding panels of different size and colour have been selected to create a striking effect and support a contemporary architectural style. However, within this context, it is of greater significance to seek to integrate with neighbouring heritage assets while a contemporary style can be sensitively achieved using traditional materials.
3.0	Recommendations:
3.1	Particular consideration of the strong horizontal lines of neighbouring buildings (window, floor, eaves and ridge heights) to improve integration with these and marry

	two important street frontages.
3.2	Consider the proposed building line in relation to that of South Terrace – any extension beyond this has a greater visual impact on heritage assets and views towards the waterfront.
3.3	Consider visual impact from the wider context, in particular, further along South Terrace and Pier Road, Arun Parade and the golf and sailing clubs. These will help to guide a sensitive massing strategy that minimises impact and strengthens heritage assets.
3.4	Consider reducing the overall footprint to maintain external area for services, storage, access and means of escape.
3.5	It is noted that the proposed panels were selected to reflect natural tones at the waterfront and while this is an interesting concept, given the sensitive location of the site, it would be more applicable to integrate with the existing built form context. In this respect, the use of similar forms, materials and tones of existing buildings within the area of special character and the conservation area would be welcomed.

SOUTH TERRACE

