

Design & Access and Planning

Statement:

Site Address: The Nelson Hotel, 61 Pier Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LP

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Stojanovski

Date: 11th January 2022

Rev 1 – 16th February 2022 – added Heritage Statement (Page 11)

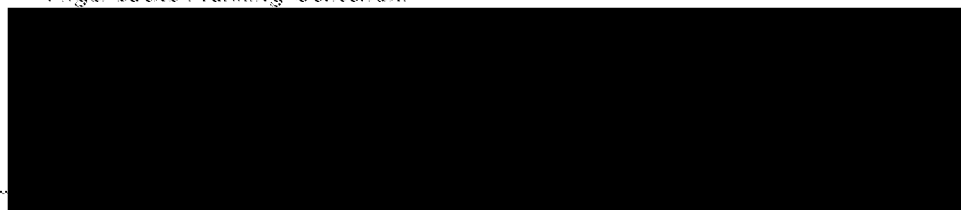
The Site
and its



Surroundings

Nigel Locke Planning Consultant

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The property occupies a prominent position in the heart of the visitor/tourist area of the town opposite the amusement park, the river and the seafront.

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It is in an accessible and sustainable location within walking distance of Littlehampton Town Centre and station. Bus services link to Chichester and Arundel to the west and Worthing and Brighton to the east.

The property at present comprises a two storey hotel, restaurant and bar. It has rendered elevations under a tiled roof. The whole property is in need of redecoration and refurbishment having been empty, and not operating, for approximately 4 years. Apart from an entrance on the east side giving access to the basement and small courtyard area, there is no outside space with the property. Adequate car parking is available, either on road or in the extensive public car parks almost opposite the property.

Proposal

Is to update the existing property to provide a high-class restaurant, bar and function room. It is also proposed to upgrade and extend the letting rooms to provide accommodation to a high standard expected of a modern family hotel.

The proposals include internal alterations to the existing basement floor, ground floor and first floor. The redevelopment of the roof to incorporate a second floor, and an extension to the rear to be incorporated into the new 3 storey design, with additional rooms and rear staircase.

The new second floor will be set back from the existing building so that it does not appear dominant.

I will deal with the alterations in more detail later in this statement.

Background to the Application

The property was taken over by Mr & Mrs Stojanovski who have owned the property for many years but have leased it out. Mr & Mrs Stojanovski have successfully run the Vardar Restaurant and VIP Club in the town for many years.

Their intention is to upgrade and modernise the property, which needs renovation and updating, to provide a modern hotel, restaurant and bar facility in this visitor area of the town. At the same time they wish to upgrade the standard of architecture to provide a building that is more contemporary in style and will be visually more attractive and imposing on this prominent site.

An initial concept of modernising the building and providing a contemporary second floor aspect was welcomed in principle by Planning Officer David Eastern on an informal pre-application meeting during the process of the

previous planning application which was approved in 2017 (details below). He advised that it should be presented to the Littlehampton Town Council for their initial opinion.



The architects presented draft plans of the scheme to Littlehampton Town Council on 27th June 2016. The overall opinion was that the committee were pleased with The Nelson being improved and there were no negative comments in relation to the design.

Questions relating to disabled access and facilities in the rooms were noted and have been incorporated in the final application scheme.

In response to questions relating to parking for staff and guests, it was stated that there are no current facilities on site but plenty of car parking is available on nearby roads and public car parks.

Following these pre-application presentations and discussions the plans that form application LU/280/16/PL were submitted. Littlehampton Town Council supported this application but it was refused under delegated powers. A revised application (reference: LU/84/17/PL) was approved on 24th May 2017 and the Decision Notice is attached to this statement. As the commencement date has now expired the application is now submitted with no alterations to the approved plan.

An up-to-date Flood Risk Assessment will accompany the application.

Use

The property has been trading for many years as a family hotel with restaurant and bar facilities together with a small basement function room.

The proposal seeks to upgrade and expand these facilities, but no change of use is proposed.

The existing internal layout of the property does not currently comply with requirements for emergency escape.

En-suite facilities are dated, inadequate and in poor condition.

There is no disabled access to the premises.

The exterior of the property is in poor condition and in need of repair and renovation.

The roof structure is a varied series of original roof shapes and add-ons resulting in a building that is visually unattractive with no particular architectural style or features.

The proposal seeks to remedy the above issues with the existing property to provide a hotel and restaurant facility that is compliant with present day regulations and provides the standard of accommodation that visitors would expect.



Scale

The existing property is lower in scale than the adjacent period terrace properties in South Terrace, which have accommodation on three floors plus a basement plus a pitch roof. The proposal alters the existing roof construction and adds accommodation to the second floor. Due to the contemporary design this can be achieved with only a relatively modest increase in scale above the existing property and to a scale that will be in keeping with adjacent properties and its setting.

Whilst the scale of the property is slightly increased the new contemporary design provides a more cohesive design of elevations with a sleek modern roof line and balanced elevations incorporating a more modern style of glazing to the windows with new framings. Overall it is considered that the proposed scale of the property is appropriate to its location.

The second floor has been set back by one metre on the west, south and east as requested by the planning officer during the process of the previous application.

Layout

The alterations to the internal layout seek to refurbish existing letting rooms and add further guest bedrooms. All the bedrooms will now have en-suites and they will be to a good size and well furnished.

A new internal lift will provide access to all floors including the basement and an additional rear staircase will further improve access and emergency escapes from the building.

New disabled rooms are provided on the first and second floors with wheelchair accessible en-suites.

A summary of the proposed alterations is as follows.

Basement Floor

At present this provides storage, beer cellar, men's and ladies toilets, a small covered courtyard and function room.

It is proposed to extend the function room and provide a bar area within it, therefore giving the function room self-contained use without having to access main areas of the hotel.

Men's, ladies and wheelchair accessible toilets will be provided immediately adjacent to the function area.



Basement storage areas and beer cellar will remain.

A large covered courtyard area will be provided.

Ground Floor

The bar area will be extended to provide a separate restaurant area and bar area as indicated on the application drawings. Ladies, gents and disabled toilets are provided off the bar area.

Stairlifts will be fitted to the outside steps for ease of access for visitors with mobility difficulties. The internal lifts serve all floors making the whole hotel accessible.

The two existing kitchen areas will be opened up to provide one more functional kitchen and preparation areas.

There will be a reception area and staff room in place of one of the existing bedrooms.

An important part of the proposed renovations of this hotel is the improvement and viability of the restaurant area.

In order to achieve this, we need to maximise its attractiveness and appeal to attract diners to what is a competitive local market.

The layout of the restaurant as proposed gives the opportunity to give flexibility of seating arrangements within the space and by having the large picture window, it can give all tables the benefit of this southerly aspect, whereas with individually spaced windows some diners would have "second class" positions behind pillars etc.

The architect's design concept should be to maximise the whole usage of the space, the character and the user experience. It is not felt that this particular important feature of the design should be compromised.

It is felt by the design team that keeping existing small individual windows would greatly restrict the affect of the whole restaurant and building.

With hotels that have successful separate restaurants areas on the ground floor with hotel accommodation above, they tend to make a feature of the ground floor restaurant area, rather than trying to keep symmetry with the hotel accommodation above.

Photographs of four examples are shown in the appendix to this statement.

First Floor

A rear and side extension will extend the existing first floor accommodation in order that it can now provide two disabled accessible rooms. Six further bedrooms on this floor will be upgraded and refurbished including the provision of en-suite facilities to each room. One new guest room will be added in the new extension on this floor.

Second Floor

The new second floor will be set back from the original building.

A total of seven new guest rooms will be formed on the second floor including one laid out for wheelchair access. All rooms to be well furnished and to provide en-suite facilities.

It is considered that the alterations will provide a high class restaurant and bar area on the ground floor together with a more self-contained function room and covered courtyard seating area on the basement floor. A total of fourteen, either refurbished or newly built guest bedrooms will be provided.

The new layout will not only be compliant with current building and fire regulations but it will also provide new high class restaurant and bar facilities together with high grade family hotel accommodation. Altogether this will add further vitality to the local economy.

There still is a fully glazed extension to the easterly elevation housing an escape stair in line with current regulations.

New glass balcony to the second floor and to room 3 on the first floor. Rooms 2, 5 and 6 will have glazed doors to a balcony instead of the existing box bays.

Appearance

The existing hotel building looks tired, old fashioned with add on roof extensions that detract from the overall visual appearance of the property.

When considering the need to refurbish and enlarge the existing hotel as well as providing a high standard of accommodation and facilities, it was felt important to also provide an external design that considerably enhances the building's appearance on what is a very prominent site.

It is considered that the design concept provides a more contemporary and cohesive design approach, whilst still retaining traditional aspects of the original building such as the external rendering.



External materials are as follows, on the ground floor and first floor the elevations will be to a white render finish. Second floor to be in grey cladding as existing.

All windows and door frames will be grey. These will give a sleek contemporary look to the building whilst still reflecting the look of the existing hotel with the white render.

The new second floor will be set back from the face of the building. This was a feature discussed with the Planning Officer and the Town Council in consultation during the previous planning process.

The fenestration is designed in line with requests by planning in the architect's meeting with Anita Gardner and Martyn White during the previous planning process. First floor box bays were removed on the request of Martyn White. It was also agreed at that time that we keep the large restaurant window on the ground floor.

It is considered that the enlarged restaurant window is vital not only to the external appearance of the building but also to the viability of the improved restaurant area. The applicants are very keen to promote the new restaurant as an all year round stand alone venture from the hotel accommodation.

At present the restaurant area is very dark and has very little atmosphere, whereas the improvements suggested will give a light spacious modern feel to the restaurant and provide customers with a panoramic southerly view.

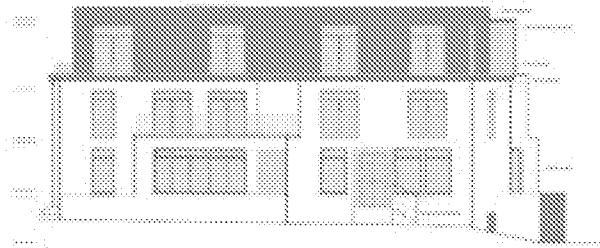
Whilst the proposed new window would not match others in the building, this already the case, as it is not on the same plain as the first and second floor windows, as the first floor is set back beyond a deep balcony and the second floor set back even further. The ground floor is at an angle so overall looking at the existing building and other options for the front elevation, little symmetry can be provided from the street view.

This is a unique stand alone building and the proposed renovations give the opportunity to provide a landmark building of 21st century architecture.

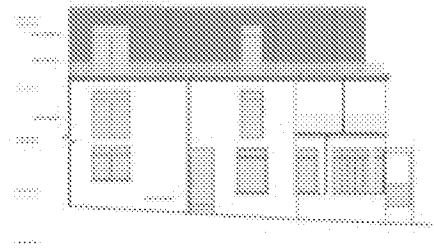
I copy below photographs of the existing building together with the application drawings of the proposed new design. I consider that these speak for themselves as to the improvement that this proposal will bring to the site.



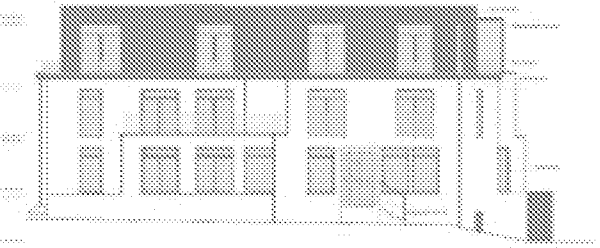




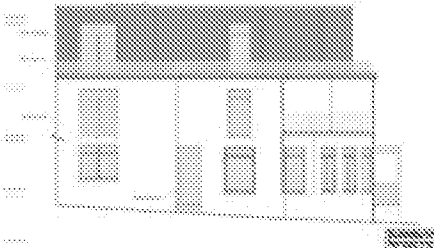
FRONT ELEVATION SOUTH
PROPOSED ELEVATIONS 1:150 Option 1



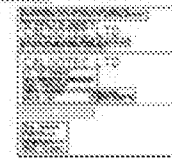
SIDE ELEVATION WEST



FRONT ELEVATION SOUTH
PROPOSED ELEVATIONS 1:150 Option 2



SIDE ELEVATION WEST



Landscaping

The property has very little external space, just a small rear courtyard area approached from a side entrance. A small outside courtyard area will still be retained and there will be a new covered exterior area.

Access

The main entrance to the restaurant and bar will be retained in the same position but steps will be improved. Better circulation space will be provided to the public areas such as restaurant, bar and the basement function room.

The existing west (side) entrance will be enhanced and used as the main entrance for the hotel. The steps to both entrances will be fitted with stairlifts.

A lift will be provided to all floors including the basement giving disabled visitors access to all public areas of the hotel. Two dedicated wheelchair accessible rooms will be provided on the first and second floors. Escape routes will be provided in accordance with the appropriate legislation.

Heritage Statement



The property is positioned on a very prominent seafront location at the junction of Pier Road and South Terrace, The property sits prominently on the corner and is immediately visible to residents of and visitors to Littlehampton when visiting this main tourist seafront and riverside location. Located nearby are:

- Pier Road with its characterful buildings with local eateries, takeaways, gift shops and riverside promenade
- Harbour Park amusements with the Windmill Restaurant and Cinema
- The seafront promenade and popular beaches

The property also sits at the end of the characterful South Terrace, but separated by a lane which runs alongside the Nelson and behind the Pier Road shops and flats.

The property stands alone in it's style and, of late, having been closed for some 4 years, has become an 'eye-sore' in this prominent location.

The proposal seeks to refurbish and extend the property to be a modern focal point and figurehead on this corner, while not detracting or seeking to 'copy' the style of the surrounding character buildings, which can often look fake and contrived. While maintaining the character of the area this proposal will enhance this building, the vista and provide a much needed uplift to this busy tourist and leisure area, and provide a much needed facility for Littlehampton.

Planning Statement

Context

The proposal has been arrived at in order to achieve an extension to the hotel letting accommodation to provide newly furnished and renovated or newly built guest bedrooms with en-suite facilities.

The new second floor is set in from the existing building so as not to be over dominant.

The brief was also to provide more accessible and modern restaurant and function facilities and at the same time to enhance the standard of architecture with contemporary alterations.

This is a resubmission of approved application (reference: LU/84/17/PL).

The proposals compliance with relevant current local and national planning policies has also been taken into consideration.

Flood Risk Assessment

The applicants have commissioned an updated flood risk assessment by a specialist company and their report forms part of their application (to follow at time of application).

The applicants will comply with any recommendations made in the flood risk assessment report.

Local Planning Policies

The following policies contained in the Arun District Council Adopted Local Plan are as follows.

Policy SD SP1: Sustainable Development

The property is in a very sustainable location. Water and energy saving measures will be incorporated in the build. It is not considered that the proposal will cause any harm to the local environment or the existing biodiversity of the site. It will contribute to the viability and sustainability of the local economy by providing a new business/tourism enterprise to the town, creating employment opportunities.

Policy EM PDM1: Employment Land & Policy SKILLS SP1: Employment

The proposal will expand the use of an existing hotel/restaurant business providing excellent full time and part time employment opportunities, as well as business opportunities for local suppliers.

Policy D DM4: Extensions and Alterations to Existing Buildings Residential and Non Residential

The application makes efficient use of the existing space as well as removing existing mis-match of roof shapes and levels and consolidating this space into useful second floor guest rooms under a flat roof set back from the main building line.

Policy TOU SP1: Sustainable Tourism and the Visitor Economy & Policy TOU DM1: Tourism Related Development

The increased and upgraded letting bedroom accommodation proposed will increase the amount of visitor accommodation on Littlehampton Seafront. The quality of the accommodation will be greatly improved with external and internal areas improved to maximise their accessibility and useability and maximise the viability and profitability of the business ongoing.

It is considered that the proposal will make a considerable contribution to tourism in the area.

Policy T SP1: Transport and Development & Policy T DM1: Sustainable Travel

The hotel is in a sustainable and accessible location on Littlehampton Seafront. It is noted that the County Highway Authority were consulted on the previously approved application and raised no objection to the proposal.

Policy ECC SP2: Energy and Climate Change Mitigation

The proposed extensive renovations to modern day Building Regulation requirements will incorporate all water and energy saving measures, so that overall, the energy efficiency of the building will be greatly improved.

Policy W DM2: Flood Risk

A separate Flood Risk Assessment by specialist consultants will form part of this application.

Policy QE SP1: Quality of the Environment; Policy D SP1: Design & Policy D DM1: Aspects of Form and Design Quality

The existing building does not relate in terms of design and appearance to any of the adjacent properties. Both the exterior and interior are tired and in poor repair with untidy rooflines that are not visually attractive.

It is considered that this proposal will raise the standard of architecture in the locality by creating a building of high individual architectural merit to a more contemporary appearance, making a positive visual contribution to the street scene.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with relevant policies contained in the Arun District Council Adopted Local Plan.

Littlehampton Neighbourhood Plan

There are no specific policies in the Neighbourhood Plan relating to this type of development. Littlehampton Town Council supported the previous application, commenting as follows:

"Support - in terms of its design and positive impact on the town. The efforts made to amend the plans to deal with the concerns of the Conservation Officer are welcomed. As before, the investment in Littlehampton and the opportunity to provide high quality accommodation and event space in this beautiful location is welcomed. The significant improvements to disabled facilities incorporated within the plans are also welcome."

The National Planning Policy Framework

This was revised in July 2021 and policies relevant to this application are as follows.

Section 2: Achieving Sustainable Development

This policy states that there are three objectives in sustainable development – Economic, Social and Environmental.

Economic

To continue the country's post Covid economic recovery innovative new business ventures, such as this one, should be encouraged as it will make a positive contribution to the local economy and employment. Construction

works should provide opportunities for local contractors and suppliers and the new business should also provide excellent opportunities for local services and suppliers.

Social

The proposal provides a high quality hotel/restaurant business for the enjoyment of both local residents and visitors.

Environmental

The energy efficiency of the building will be improved and there will be no adverse effect upon the local environment.

Section 4: Decision Making

This states Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area, which is this case with this application.

Section 6: Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

Paragraph 81 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

This proposal will make a considerable contribution to the growth of the local and tourism economy.

Section 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport

Paragraph 104 states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals.

The hotel is in a sustainable and very accessible location on Littlehampton Seafront where there is considerable space for visitor car parking. It is also within easy walking distance of Littlehampton mainline Railway Station.

West Sussex County Council Highways Department supported the previously approved application.

Section 12. Achieving Well-Designed Places

Paragraph 126 states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

The proposal, which introduces a high quality, 21st century design appearance will considerably raise the standard of architecture in the area and be a great improvement on the existing building, which now looks very dated and has no particular architectural appeal.

The proposal is considered to be sustainable development in accordance with the guidelines set out in the NPPF.

The hotel is within a sustainable location in a popular tourist and visitor part of the town. The upgraded bar, restaurant facilities and function room will provide extra high quality services to both local residents and visitors.

It is in an ideal visitor location within walking distance of the seafront, opposite the amusement park, the river attractions and it is within walking distance of the town centre. Bus services to neighbouring towns and visitor attractions close by.

The extensions, refurbishments and alterations will be carried out using high quality materials. High levels of insulation, together with water and energy saving measures will be incorporated in the specification to provide a building that is more energy efficient and eco friendly compared to the existing hotel building.

It is considered that the development can be achieved without adversely impacting upon neighbour amenity and in this regard I copy below an extract from the Planning Officer's Delegated Report on the previously approved application.

"The proposal would no longer result in a materially adverse overbearing impact on the adjacent property no. 60. The staircase is 2m from the boundary and the overall height of the building has not increased, although its footprint has increased. The extension and staircase have now been repositioned further from the boundary. There are 2 additional windows in the north elevation at first and second floor level and these are conditioned to be obscure glazed to prevent adverse overlooking.

The existing use as a pub and hotel operates within the existing license and it is not proposed to increase these hours. Whilst the number of guests would potentially increase, together with the range of facilities offered it is not considered that the increase in activity would be significant or unreasonable given the existing permitted use of the premises and its location."

Conclusion

As the local and national economies seek to recover and expand post Covid, it is particularly important that high quality business expansion proposals, such as this one, is encouraged and it is hoped that the Council will once again support this application. The design submitted is in line with all discussions, and agreements with the Conservation Officer and Planning Officer during the previously approved application.