

Change of use, conversion and extension of 56/57 Pier Road, Littlehampton



Design and Access Statement

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CONTEXT

56/57 Pier Road is a four-storey pair of terrace buildings currently the River Breeze restaurant on the lower ground and ground floor and a large five bedroomed flat on the first and second floors. It is located close to the centre of a terrace of 13 properties built in the mid 1920s. This row was built over the footprint of 13 fisherman's cottages built around one hundred years previous.

Pier Road runs parallel to the new multi-million pound tidal defences provided by the Environment Agency some two years ago and creates a link for both vehicles and pedestrians to the centre of Littlehampton, a few hundred yards to the north and the sea front to the south. The buildings lie within the urban area where the principle of development is considered acceptable. It is very central to the town and is well served by public transport, with bus stops and the railway station, all within a short walk.

All the businesses in the terrace are cafes or restaurants and very close to the south, towards Arun Parade and the seafront further food and drink outlets. There are over 20 destinations to eat and drink within five minutes walk of Pier Road,

There have over the last two centuries been many changes to this terrace. Originally terraced houses for the fishermen of the town, these were either partly or wholly replaced by new dwellings along with the warehousing to support the mussel and oyster businesses that thrived during the 19th century and into the first part of the 20th century.

This part of Pier Road, incorporating the terrace of 13 properties, is on a raised section of land.

Today most of the terrace has commercial use at the front, with three exceptions and behind and above the commercial use, each has either multiple or single occupancy flats.

Rear access to the property is via a private drive off of South Terrace which serves all the properties along Pier Road. The ground level to the rear is some 1.5 metres lower than Pier Road and as a result there are lower ground floors to each of the properties. In the case of the three wholly residential uses in the terrace, these lower ground floors provide living accommodation, whereas the remainder provide support space for the businesses, as is the case for 56/57 Pier Road.

There is a large four space garage behind no. 57 totalling 34 sq.m gross external area. The main terraced buildings have a GEA of 492 sq.m. Of this area, the trading part of the restaurant has a total area of 81 sq.m. The plot has an area of 288 sq.m.

The "shop front" to 56 and 57 has a brick dado and full width shop windows to both parts, with two single entrance doors and the name board over. To the rear there have been many alterations and extensions over time, not just to 56 and 57 but to all the Pier Road terrace.

The terrace is generally of painted rendered walls with some brick, timber and UPVC cladding. The original angled projecting first floor bay windows have the most part been replaced with squared off rectangular bays with picture style windows, albeit a number of the original style remain. The pitched roof at the front is plain clay tile and most of the roofs to the rear are flat.



View north from
Arun Parade with
Pier Road Terrace
in background



View north up Pier
Road Terrace



View east of the
Pier Road terrace
southern end



View east of the
Pier Road terrace
northern end



Views west of rear
elevation from
yard with garage
on right



When the Pier Road terrace was reconstructed in the 1920s, Littlehampton, with its railway station and links straight through to London, was a major holiday destination. The terrace was set up for businesses to support this very busy holiday trade. This continued until the 1970s when overseas holidays became accessible for so many of the previous visitors to Littlehampton, along with so many seaside towns in the south, so easily accessed by public transport. At the same time the affordability of private cars offered far greater choice of destination, not needing public transport links.

From that time on tourism has steadily declined. The day tripper has for the greater part taken over from the holiday maker.

The Kavaleiros family have owned and run the River Breeze for approaching twenty years. It is a family business lead by the principle Mr Michael Kavaleiros. Other members of the immediate family have always worked in the business and in that way, overheads have been minimised. The family have always lived in the large five bedroom flat, "over the shop".

Over the last decade, with the amount of competition in the area, especially in Pier Road and the sea front, the business, despite family input keeping outgoings in check, has become increasingly marginal.

In 2014/2015 the Environment Agency undertook tidal defence improvements to the area, with the new promenade along Pier Road. The works impacted enormously on the business and no compensation for the disruption and access closures was given. The business would have closed had Mr Kavaleiros not injected pension savings to keep the business afloat, impacting further on his future.

Mr Kavaleiros is approaching retirement age and his family are leaving the family home to set up their own homes and in new careers. There is no one wishing to take on the family business. As a result, staff have been and continue to be recruited from outside the family, significantly adding to the overheads, further marginalising the business, which is now barely viable.

Mr Kavaleiros foresaw this some years ago and began looking at his options. At one time seeking to either reduce the restaurant to one unit with the rest as residential or change of use and conversion to two cottages. He also sought valuations for the business with accommodation over and for the past two years has through agents been seeking potential buyers for the existing, with not one serious enquiry.

Over the last decade businesses have closed in the terrace and remain either empty and deteriorating as buildings.

The last property value for sale of the business and building was May 2016 recommending a figure of between £390,000 and £400,000. This figure was 25% less than previous selling values advised. This was further promoted and no enquiries have been forthcoming to date.

No 51 Pier Road sold last year, a similar property and also a restaurant with accommodation. It took five years to sell for £325,000 having been valued at £475,000.

With regard to flood risk, the attached Flood Risk Assessment addresses these, based upon the Environment Agencies own records. Given the site specific and building details, the FRA identifies that in the circumstances the requirement is to ensure that measures are incorporated within the development to mitigate the risk of flooding from tidal sources, bearing in mind that these are long established existing buildings.

In 2012 serious flooding was experienced along the south coast, including parts of Littlehampton. The report from West Sussex County Council following this event stated that Pier Road was at risk from river and sea.

Subsequent to this, the Environment Agency invested over £20 million in new tidal flood defences along Pier Road to deal with this, albeit the Pier Road terrace, with its many residential semi-basements, experienced no flooding. Other areas of Littlehampton suffered flooding from surface water and in some cases foul water mixed, but not Pier Road.

The Flood Risk Assessment included in this application confirms that the Environment Agencies own records show there has never been an occurrence of flooding due to tide levels in Pier Road.

For the 27 years since 1990 that the applicant has been in business on Pier Road no flooding has occurred.

Whilst the points raised in the previous paragraphs addressing the FRA are still relevant, the Environment Agency letter of 24th August 2017 referring to the previous refused application has been taken under consideration and the new proposals reflect the advice given.

The habitable use at basement level has therefore been omitted and at the raised ground floor internally tanked to meet with the advice by the EA – *"Basements would only be suitable for storage/ ancillary purposes (as previous use). Ground floor levels could be used for habitable accommodation if internal tanking could be installed to the 1 in 200 year plus climate change undefended level of 4.94m AOD, subject to Communities Practice Guidelines, suitable and safe egress and access and Building Control approval."*

Pre-application advice

Advice has been formally sought on two occasions during 2016 and discussions held with the planning officer to reach agreement in principle to the proposals.

The previous application was refused solely due to Environment Agency opposition

The following proposals reflect previous representations and the advice received.

PROPOSAL

Layout

The proposal is to maintain the shop fronts for their full length. The depth of the shops will be returned to their original size and state when built in the 1920s, which is the depth of the terrace cottages. The lower ground floor will serve as storage and additional retail space for the road frontage retail units. The remainder of the existing floor space over three floors will be converted and extended to provide six single bedroom accommodation units, accessed from the rear, an increase of five residential units.

The proposal is to change the commercial use from A3 to A1. As was set out under context, the large number of cafes and restaurants now in the immediate area have made the business marginal to the point of no longer being viable. It is appreciated that the retail frontage of the east bank of the Arun in this area is important, therefore, with minor changes, this character and commercial use is retained and extended, with the addition of lower ground floor space, with staircase access from the upper ground floor.

The retail area with its lower and upper ground floor, totals gross internal:

- Shop Unit 1 - 92.7sqm
- Shop Unit 2 – 87.7sq.m

The six one bedroom flats have gross internal areas as follows:-

1. 46sq.m – one bed
2. 42sq.m - one bed
3. 64sq.m - one bed
4. 65sq.m - one bed
5. 56sq.m - one bed
6. 53sq.m - one bed

The combined gross external area of the proposal is 546sq.m.

The existing four space garage is removed, to provide amenity space.

In terms of amenity space, flats 3 and 4 will have a terrace of 10 sq.m each, flats 1,2, 5 and 6 share a rear garden amenity space of 56 sq.m.

In addition to the amenity space are communal waste and recycling bins and bicycle racks.

Design

The proposal makes alterations to the Pier Road frontage by raising the floor and entrance level by approximately 50 cm to its original level, as several of the properties in the terrace have done, enabling the provision of low level natural lighting and ventilation to the lower ground floor, thereby increasing the usable area.

The road frontage itself is divided into two large shop windows with a central recessed entrance. This again reflects other frontages in the terrace as can be seen on the Street Scene elevations forming part of this application.

Above the shop fronts, the first-floor accommodation has two bay windows as existing, but these have been replaced in the original style and scale, as some still remain within the terrace. Above that on the second floor French windows are introduced to bring natural day light into the accommodation, with Juliet balcony frontage. The immediate neighbour to the north has an accessible balcony.

This residential accommodation has been housed within the existing building envelope, maximising use of the available existing space. Behind that the existing and various extensions have been both replaced, developed and locally extended to rationalise a fairly chaotic rear elevation. With the exception of the communal staircase, the rear building line remains generally as the existing.

All six flats are accessed via the new enclosed staircase

The FRA sets out the tests and proposals in detail.

Each of the flats has a single double bedroom with bathroom and a combined living and dining space, including the kitchen.

All new external walls will be colour rendered in a smooth finish to match the existing. The new sections of pitched roof will be tiled to match the existing, the remainder of roofs will be flat. All external doors and windows will be white upvc or powder coated aluminium, in view of the corrosive nature of the saline atmosphere.

As previously mentioned the ground floor walls will be tanked full height, in fact it is the intention to provide tanking to all walls from the lower ground floor slab up to first floor, more than meeting the EA advice/requirements.

Externally at the rear, the main shared amenity space will be grassed with a paved pathway to the staircase entrance. Terrace floors will be paved.

The external space at the rear at present is all non-pervious, comprising the garage and concrete yard. Replacement of this with grass and open gravel provides improved ground porosity to the area.

Boundaries and the enclosures for bins and bicycles will have close boarded timber fencing.

No parking is provided within the site. There is ample on street parking in South Terrace and there are public car parks within a short distance. Given the closeness to public transport, shops, support services, public amenities and facilities as well as the large public open spaces off of South terrace, this location has very high sustainability and accessibility for those on foot.

ACCESS

A communal staircase provides full access to flats 3 to 6.

All entrances into the flats will be through doors, wide enough to be classified as mobility doors.

The internal doors will be 926mm wide in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations.