ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL:LU/7/09/

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**7 & 9 Norfolk Road, Littlehampton, BN17 5PW**
**Nat Grid Ref TQ 035 016**

## DESIGN and ACCESS STATEMENT

**Proposal: Change Use of ground floor of No.7 Norfolk Road from shops to self-contained residential units, including incorporating one existing first-floor bedroom**

### The Locality

The site lies in the Littlehampton Beach Conservation Area, and is located at the north-east corner of the intersection of Norfolk Road and Western Road.

Norfolk Road is a main local distributor leading to South Terrace and the seafront road to Rustington. Western Road is one of two feeder roads for the residential area at the east end of the conservation area, forming the historical extreme east limit of development in the town.

The buildings in Norfolk Road are predominately three storey, while Western Road is mainly two-storey. The buildings on the east side of Norfolk Road, and in Western Road to the east of Norfolk Road are either Regency or early Victorian, with a number of older cottages along Western Road. Most of the buildings in both streets started out as dwellings, but many were converted at some stage to commercial use, including the Application Site which seems to have been fitted with plate glass windows under iron beams before 1880 judging from contemporary photographs.

On the west side of Norfolk Road, there is a group of late-Victorian shops south of the intersection, and a pair of blocks of flats built in the late1970s directly opposite the Application Site. These flats aspire to be generally sympathetic to the straightforward Georgian / Regency / early 19th century forms of the buildings on the east side of Norfolk Road. A little further to the north, beyond Selborne Road, there is a late 19th century development of larger-scale semi-detached villas.

The area formerly contained a relatively high proportion of shops and small businesses involved in a wide variety of activities, however changing patterns of shopping and the growth of out of town retail centres have resulted in these activities dwindling down as they have become unviable, with the result that of approximately thirty premises identified as having had retail or small business use during the past sixty years or so, only five are now actively trading, and only three of these offer goods or services to passers-by. These figures apply to small retail shops and workshops, and exclude several Public Houses, Hotels and Schools, which are all now gone except for one Public House.

The majority of the buildings in Norfolk Road to the south or west of the Application Site are now in multiple occupation residential (or institutional) use. To the north, the houses on the east side of Norfolk Road (generally early nineteenth century) are mostly in single-family occupation, while the majority of the late Victorian houses on the west side are in multiple occupation.

### The Site

The site is orientated approximately North-South. The principal elevations of the existing buildings face West, and the side elevation faces South. The site to the rear of No.9 Norfolk Road extends further to the east than the frontage of No.7 along

Western road. The buildings appear to share several characteristics with nos. 4, 5 and 6 Norfolk Place, including the slightly lower rear eaves and asymmetrical ridge line, which would also suggest that these houses also originally probably had a rather severe minimal simplicity, but now little of the original subtlety of detail and proportion remains, except to some extent on the frontage of No.9 which is a generally positive component of the row. No.7 is very down-at-heel in it's present, commercial, form, but all the same the building book-ends the east side of Norfolk Road, and together with No.9 is important in providing solidity of scale to the attractive mix of houses to the north

The site is close to, but outside the areas identified by the Environment Agency as being at risk from projected flood levels in the next 200 years. There are no known pollution hazards on the site, the uses over the last two hundred years are thought to be either domestic or catering / retail trade / clerical.

**Factors that make the Proposals necessary**

The Applicant has owned these buildings approximately fifteen years, but has always had difficulty in finding long-term tenants for the corner shop in number 7. The shop facing Western Road was occupied continuously for several years, but since that business stopped trading it has not been possible to find a suitable occupant. The Applicant has tried to market these shop tenancies for longer than any other of the former retail premises in the conservation area, and has found that no tenants are forthcoming who are prepared to take on conventional commercial leases, but on the contrary will only enter into short-term licenses (some have wanted to operate on a weekly basis), and such tenants as have occupied the shops in the last five years have shown a high incidence of non-payment of rents, which has resulted in there being negligible income from the shops. Small shops seem to be no longer viable in this location.

In the meantime, significant structural cracking and movement in the buildings has been identified, and the Applicant is under Local Authority Order to have repairs carried out. The primary cause of the failures is the wrought-iron structure inserted into the building around 1880,and the steel structure supporting the later shopfronts along Western Road, which have now deteriorated and weakened as the result of dampness over the years. Like many shop-front structures, the large windows throw concentrated stresses onto the remaining original structure, and there is always a suspicion that the loads are bordering on excessive where they are carried by the subsoil. Considering the original construction materials (largely cobbles, chalk, brick and bungaroosh) it was not exactly sympathetic to remove such large sections of exterior walling, and as the building gets older it will become increasingly harder to keep it stable.

The applicant has had a full Remedial Scheme prepared by a Structural Engineer, which is both extensive and costly; however the cost that is attributable to replacing the shopfront beams and associated supports is particularly high, and calls into question the viability of restoring the shopfronts when there is no identifiable interest from potential occupiers. It seems better from all points of view not to restore the shop windows, but to revert to something nearer the original form of the building.

**The Proposals**

The form of the proposed alterations to the existing buildings takes account of the forms and scale of existing neighbouring buildings, and the probable original form of

the application site. The proposals abide with the conventions of the urban character of this area. The proposed uses are compatible with the location.

**Neighbouring Properties and the Effects of the Proposals on their amenities**
The proposals do not overlook any private areas of adjoining properties.

**Access Issues**
Pedestrian access to the proposed flats is directly from the pavement.
Parking is restricted along the both frontages in order to preserve visibility at the intersection. Current uses on the Application Site rarely cause any obstruction or congestion in the adjoining roads, and to no greater extent than the other nearby residential properties.
There is currently space for two vehicles to park off-road in the yard on the east side of the application site, together with space for several bicycles.
The proposed use would generate less traffic to and from the site than would be expected from two Retail Shops. Occupants of other flats in the application site tend not to own motor vehicles. Shortage of parking spaces due to the demands of residents does not seem to be a problem in the conservation area, such problems as do arise are known to be due to casual parking by users of the seafront and leisure gardens and bowling facilities, by public house customers on some busy nights, and by staff working at local care homes.

**Sustainability**
The proposed alterations to the building will result in a very significant reduction in energy requirements by replacing large areas of single-glazed perimeter with highly insulated walling.
The proposed dwellings are within short convenient walking distance of two general food stores and a newsagent; and for the time being at least within 100 metres of a bus service; and within walking distance of a main line railway service.

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