Imperial China Restaurant, Wordsworth Road, Worthing.

Heritage Statement to support planning application AWDM/0321/24

Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a current planning application (AWDM/0321/24) that was submitted to and received by the Council on 7th March 2024. The application was then validated on 11th March 2024.

The application effectively seeks a renewal of two earlier planning permissions that have previously both been approved by the Council, the most recent of which was approved in March 2021 and is planning permission AWDM/2018/20.

The development proposed is as follows:-

"Proposed 1.8m high railing and gates together with part 1.8m and part 1.6m high rendered wall to the north, east and south boundaries and timber gate at north boundary".

Since its original submission, the application has been amended slightly to address recent concerns raised by the Council. This amendment has introduced an additional folding metal gate in the east boundary wall, in order to provide improved access to the restaurant kitchen.

Context

The Imperial China restaurant originally formed part of the adjacent Burlington Hotel, which is a Grade II Listed Building and which opened as Worthing's first purpose-built hotel in 1865. It was initially known as the Heene Hotel and is Worthing's oldest purpose-built hotel. Around 20 years ago, following a sale, the former Burlington Hotel was split into two separate elements. The Burlington Hotel has continued to occupy the southern part of the site, while the northern three storey element has since been the Imperial China restaurant, a highly successful and popular local business.

Its Listing description is as follows:-

"1865. Prominent corner building in Italianate style 3 storeys and attics stuccoed. Slate mansard roof with 2 tiers of dormers. Marine Parade elevation has 3 bays. Bracket eaves cornice and bands between floors. 2nd floor windows are sashes with verticals only and cornices above. 1st floor has 3 round headed windows and tented canopy. Burnt out glazed extension to ground floor. Elevation to Road has similar windows but 3 elevation cast iron balconies at 1st floor level and central round-headed entrance with half columns with caryatids supporting the central balcony. Ground floor rusticated. Further 2 bay extension to left in matching style with double round headed windows with hood mouldings".

It is apparent from both the listing description and is clear on site that the main elevations and most important features of the Listed Building are located on the more prominent south and west elevations. To put this application in context, the wall, railings and gates proposed are to be located to the rear of the northern part of the Listed Building, in a relatively far more concealed location. Importantly, the proposal will not be highly visible from anywhere, apart from when viewing from or passing the site from the north in Brunswick Road. This is not a busy road, which only carries low levels of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The proposed railing, wall and gates are to be located within a private service area to the north east of both the Burlington Hotel and the Imperial China restaurant. This is used by both businesses, both of which are understood to enjoy certain legal rights which were established and have existed since the Burlington Hotel was separated into two different ownerships.

The application site is also located within the Seafront and Hinterland Conservation Area. The Burlington Hotel is located towards the western end of Marine Parade on Worthing seafront and which is primarily occupied by hotels and guest houses. The Imperial China restaurant is located away from and behind the seafront and faces westwards towards Wordsworth Road, from where is has its main customer entrance.

The proposal

The proposal is described above. Permission is sought to effectively renew two earlier and almost identical schemes that have previously been approved by the Council, the first in December 2017 and the second in March 2021. The applicant has not found it necessary to implement either of the earlier permissions, but currently wishes to renew and secure a fresh consent in order to protect, if required, existing legal rights that he enjoys over the land within the service area to the rear of the Burlington Hotel. He also proposes to improve the appearance of part the shared service yard area.

The original scheme was developed with help and advice from the Council, which clearly helped the two earlier permissions to be secured. In relation to the first application, it is noteworthy that improvements were made to the scheme during processing. This reflected the Conservation Area location and the Listed Building status that relates to the application site. Those elements are maintained in the current proposal

This latest application seeks planning permission to erect a boundary, by way of part rendered wall and part wrought iron railings to the side of the Imperial China Restaurant. The wall section will measure approx. 12.1 metres in length, with the first 6.1metres (closest to Brunswick Road) being 1.6metres high and the second section being 1.8metres high. The proposed railings will be at an angle from the wall and will be approximately 10.6 metres in length and 1.8metres high. The end section of the railings will see a small 90° turn to the building with a 300mm length of railings There will be a timber gate at the entrance to the enclosure, two railing gates within the rear part of the rendered wall and a further railing gate within the wrought iron railing section.

Visual Amenity

The proposed wall, railings and gates have been proposed to enclose the yard area which is located to the rear of the property, which is a concreted surface area relating to both the Burlington Hotel and the Imperial China Restaurant. The yard is used for general storage relating to the site. The screening proposed will make a positive contribution to the visual amenities of the area. The rendered wall will be painted in the same colour as the walls of Imperial China restaurant, and the railings will be painted black.

In relation to the first approved (2017) application, the Council's Planning Officer's report (to the Planning Committee) stated that the wall and the railings are considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the Listed Building and will not result in harm to the character of the Conservation Area. Opposite the site and along the road from the site, are residential properties, some of which currently have views into the service area the site. This application will screen some of the items that are currently next to the restaurant, including bins, which will be of a visual benefit to the

visual amenity and the residential amenities of the area. This remains the case under the latest application, which clearly proposes positive heritage and visual benefits.

In relation to the second approved (2021) application, the then officer's report (again) stated that the wall and the railings were considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the Listed Building and would not result in harm to the character of the Conservation Area. The screening of the yard was also concluded to be of benefit to the visual amenity of the locality and the setting of the Listed Building and the Conservation Area. Again, this remains the case under this latest application

The Worthing Society

On 15th April 2024, The Worthing Society confirmed that it has no objection to the proposed wall, railing and gates proposed in this latest application.

Conclusion

The Council has twice previously approved applications which proposed schemes that are almost identical to the current application. In both of those cases, it was agreed that the wall, gates and railings were in keeping with the character and appearance of the Listed Building and would not result in harm to the character of the Conservation Area. The screening of the yard will also be of benefit to the visual amenity of the locality and setting of the Listed Building and the Conservation Area.

The Worthing Society raises no objection to the proposal and no other heritage objections or issues have been raised.

Given all of the above, the proposal clearly meets all current heritage requirements and will, overall, make a positive contribution to the locality, the adjacent Listed Building and the Worthing Seafront and Hinterland Conservation Area. It follows that the current planning application should be approved.

Ref - MB/ICHSV1

October 2024