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A Proposal for New Flats and the Conversion of 7 The Steyne

7 The Steyne and land north of the Chatsworth Hotel Steyne

Worthing West Sussex

PLANNING STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the detailed drawings and Design Statement prepared by Neil Holland Architects, which accompany the planning application.

1.2 It is proposed to outline the policy against which these proposals should be assessed and to address some peripheral matters that are specific to the site.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

The South East Plan

2.1 The Development Plan comprises the South East Plan (May 2009) and the "saved" policies of the Worthing Local Plan (2003).

2.2 Criterion 3 of the objectives of the spatial strategy for the South East as set out in the South East Plan states that there will be a continuing strategy of urban focus and urban renaissance by encouraging accessible mixed use development in the region's network of town centres and by seeking a high quality built environment in all areas.

2.3 Policy SP3 seeks to concentrate development within or adjacent to the region's urban areas, seek to achieve at least 60 per cent of all new development across the South East on previously developed land and through conversions of existing buildings, and at the same time to ensure that urban infill/intensification is well designed and consistent with the principles of urban renaissance and sustainable development.

2.4 Policy H1 sets out the regional housing provision, with an allocation to Worthing Borough of 4,000 additional dwellings between 2006 and 2026 (an annual average of 200 dwellings).

2.5 Worthing is designated at Diagram SCT1 as a primary regional centre. Policy SCT1 states that Local Authorities should, as a priority, proactively pursue and promote the sustainable economic growth and regeneration of the Sussex coast. Paragraph 7.2 includes amongst the challenges the delivery of sufficient decent homes with a well integrated mix to meet the needs of the area.

2.6 The detailed proposals the subject of this application meet the strategic policies and objectives of the South East Plan by creating additional housing within an urban setting, by making use of previously developed land within a sustainable location and by enhancing the appearance of this important town centre gap site.

Worthing Local Plan (2003)

2.7 There are a number of appropriate policies within the Local Plan relating to all new development. Policy BE1, amongst other matters, seeks to achieve a good standard of design which is compatible with its surroundings or enhances the appearance of the locality. Likewise, Policy BE2 requires proposals to use the same or closely matching materials and detailing as used in the original construction, or to use complementary materials and detailing. These matters have been the subject of detailed discussions between Neil Holland Architects and Richard Small of Worthing Borough Council.

2.8 Policy BE3 specifically supports the development of disused land or buildings, on condition that such development achieves significant environmental improvements and beneficial use of the land and/or buildings. The detailed proposals have been acknowledged by the Officers of Worthing Borough Council to achieve these objectives.

2.9 Policy BE21 relates to development within Conservation Areas. It requires, amongst other matters, that proposals should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area in line with national policy and guidance. The site is within the Seafront Conservation Area. It is considered that development as proposed will bring about an enhancement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area arising from the infilling of a gap between substantial early 19th Century buildings by incorporating a new structure that has been wholly designed to accord with the form, materials and scale of the original buildings on either side.

2.10 Policy BE22 seeks to prevent the demolition of buildings or structures within a Conservation Area unless *"(iii) acceptable detailed plans for redevelopment have been approved."* The current scheme requires the demolition of a modern brick wall to the Steyne frontage, which will undoubtedly enhance the appearance of

the area, whilst the removal of a small section of the old brick and flint wall to the rear is necessary to allow the development to make best use of the site. It should also be borne in mind that this section of wall is within a little used accessway where there are wide variations in the form, quality and materials of the boundaries to the footpath.

2.11 Paragraph 5.52 of the supporting text to the Local Plan highlights the fact that trees within a Conservation Area are protected as of right. An existing oak tree is to be removed to allow the development to proceed. However, it is considered that this is not an important element in the street scene and the following considerations need to be taken into account:

a) The tree is in generally poor health and a number of limbs have been lopped and removed over the years. Much of the tree is hidden in views from the footpath on the west side of the Steyne and screened in views from the south, east and north by structures or by the planting within the Steyne.

b) The roots of the tree, which is closely related to the north elevation of the hotel, are affecting the foundations of that 1820's building and works would in any event be necessary to seek to limit the damage that is being caused to the north wall of the hotel. This would involve works to remove or to cut back the roots of the tree, which could have implications for its long-term health.

c) Mr Clinch has over the years assisted in the planting of a large number of trees and shrubs within the Steyne that have enhanced its overall appearance.

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

2.12 Paragraph 23 (vi) encourages Local Authorities to actively promote and facilitate good quality development which is sustainable and consistent with their Plans and (vii) ensure the provision of sufficient good quality new homes (including an appropriate mix of housing in suitable locations, whether through new development or the conversion of existing buildings.

2.13 The guidance also highlights the need for good design, which is a key element in achieving sustainable development. We have employed the services of Neil Holland Architects, given their local knowledge and involvement with a number of other schemes in Worthing that have been praised for the quality of their design.

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

2.14 PPS3 encourages the re-use of existing buildings and other sites such as this within sustainable locations. The guidance also encourages a mix of housing (paragraph 20) - one of the objectives of the current proposal in providing for a large number of three bedroom units. These appear to be in short supply in many of the more recent flatted developments in Worthing, which are one or two bedroom units.

2.15 Paragraph 31 seeks effective use of existing housing stock and sites such as this, whilst paragraph 36 seeks to identify locations for housing development that offer a range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure. That would clearly be the case here. Paragraph 37 encourages the location of housing close to good public transport accessibility. The site is on a 'bus route and within easy walking distance of Worthing main line railway stations. For these reasons it is considered suitable for a 'car free' housing scheme.

2.16 Finally, paragraph 40 sets out the key objectives of Local Authorities who should continue to make effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed. That definition includes the gardens and garages of houses as in this instance.

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

2.17 Section 4 sets out national guidance in respect of development within Conservation Areas. Paragraphs 4.16 and 4.17 are particularly relevant to this proposal given that the site is within the commercial centre of Worthing and conservation of character or appearance is therefore a major consideration. However, paragraph 4.16 acknowledges that the requirements of the legislation are not intended to prevent all new development. The emphasis will generally need to be on controlled and positive management of change.

2.18 Paragraph 4.17 states: *"Many Conservation Areas include gap sites or buildings that make no positive contribution to or, indeed, detract from the character or the appearance of the area; their replacement should be a stimulus to imaginative, high quality design and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area."*

2.19 It appears to me this particular sentence was specifically written with a development such as that proposed here in mind.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The current scheme has been sympathetically designed and development as proposed will bring about a substantial enhancement to the character and appearance of The Steyne – a view shared by the Council's Officers, with whom detailed consultations have taken place over several months. For the reasons detailed above the proposal will also accord with Development Plan and National policy and guidance. I would therefore ask that planning permission be granted.