

Planning & Heritage Statement

SITE ADDRESS: THE MEETING PLACE CAFE, KING'S ESPLANADE, HOVE



APPLICATION TYPE: PLANNING PERMISSION

ON BEHALF OF: THE MEETING PLACE CAFE

MAY 2022

Client: The Meeting Place Cafe.

Site Location: Meeting Place Cafe, King's Esplanade, Hove

Job History:

Version	Date	Author	Checked	Notes
Draft V.1	06.05.22	LTC	Client	
Draft V.2	06.05.22	LTC	Client	Fig.7 updated

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of the application for planning permission at The Meeting Place Cafe, King's Esplanade, Hove.
- 1.2 Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing cafe, and the erection of a new cafe building incorporating kitchen, customer seating, WCs, serving hatches for take-away service, and stairs up to a roof terrace with seating on the north (seaward) side of the building. The cafe would have a total of 124 covers for eating in customers.
- 1.3 In the light of pre-application advice from the Planning and Conservation Officers at Brighton & Hove Council (BHCC), the scheme has been radically re-designed, including a reduction in scale and height from a two-storey to single storey building.
- 1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with the drawings from Narch Design and Build:
 - 2203-03-02 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 - 2203-03-03 Proposed Roof Terrace Plan
 - 2203-03-04 Proposed Elevations
- 1.5 This statement demonstrates that planning permission should be granted. Analysis is provided of the design approach including scale and massing, the impact of the proposal on listed and locally listed heritage assets, the two Conservation Areas (CA), and visual amenity.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The Meeting Place Cafe is a well known local landmark situated on the boundary between Brighton and Hove, on the seafront by Hove Lawns.
- 2.2 Located on the busy beachfront path between Hove esplanade and Brighton seafront arches, the cafe benefits from a high footfall of passing trade.
- 2.3 The cafe building is a single storey, timber-clad structure with a strong 'beach hut' feel. The building is 12.5 metres long by 6.0 metres wide not including overhang, and 3.9m high to the roof ridge.
- 2.4 It has a 'saw tooth' roof, giving it the appearance of a row of painted beach huts. Serving hatches on the front, north facing elevation serve take away food to passing customers.
- 2.5 Immediately to the south and west of the cafe is a 270sqm outside area on which tables, chairs and windbreaks are placed during the day for cafe customers.
- 2.6 The existing building's age is not known. It has been designed to appear as a row of linked beach huts, and although it has a jaunty feel befitting its seaside location, its appearance is now somewhat dated – Figure 1. As other seafront landmarks are refurbished and redeveloped, taking the city into the 21st century, the Meeting Place Cafe still harks back to Brighton's bygone days.
- 2.7 The cafe sits some 30 metres south of the grade II listed Edward VII Memorial Monument, (locally known as the Peace Statue) dating from 1912. To the west and north east are two grade II listed 19th century seafront shelters. Hove seafront railings are also Grade II listed, as are Brunswick Terrace on the north side of Kingsway (Grade I) and Embassy Court (Grade II*). Hove Lawns are locally listed. The site lies in both the Regency Square and Brunswick Town Conservation Areas, as it straddles the boundary between the two – Figure 2.



Figure 1: The Meeting Place Cafe



Figure 2: Extract from City Plan Proposals Map, with site arrowed

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Planning permission for the south decking was granted in 2013 under reference BH2013/00383. There is no other planning history on the Council's website, which shows history back to 1997.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The application proposes the comprehensive redevelopment of the cafe site. The existing building is to be demolished and replaced with a single storey building with roof terrace on the rear, south side of the building.
- 4.2 The footprint of the building would be enlarged, essentially incorporating the outside seating area on the west side inside the building. The current building footprint extends to 75 sqm plus a further 330sqm of outdoor seating area (total 405sqm). The new cafe would have a footprint extending to 384sqm. The style would be contemporary, with a lightweight frame interspersed with large areas of glazing. The wide parapet that serves to shelter customers waiting by the serving hatches is a prominent feature of the design, along with the pitched roof that will screen the roof terraced from views from the north.
- 4.3 The new cafe building would be 32.5 metres long by 12 metres deep externally. The flat roof with roof terrace would be 3.7 metres above ground level. The gross internal floor area of the building would be 364sqm approx., with a further 173sqm of space on the roof terrace, giving a total GIA of 537sqm approx.
- 4.4 Inside, the building would house a large kitchen, off which four serving hatches, three to the north elevation and one to the south, would serve takeaway food direct to passing customers. The seating area inside the cafe would extend to 165sqm and hold 88 covers. Bi-fold doors on the north and south elevations can be opened fully in good weather. In the centre of the cafe stairs lead to the roof terrace, with a further 36 covers for eat in customers.
- 4.5 A pitched roof with gable ends would be added over the front (north) part of the building, mirroring the saw tooth roof on the existing building, albeit with a shallower pitch. The maximum height of the roof, to the ridges, would be 5.72sqm. In terms of height, the new building would be 1.8 metres higher than the existing building overall, including the ridged roof.
- 4.6 Other features that echo the design of the existing cafe include the deep parapet around the front of the building, which provides shelter for customers, and the prominence of the serving hatches. The building would be centred on the bollards emanating in a line south of the Peace Statue – see Figure 3.

5.0 PRE APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

- 5.1 On 6th December 2021 we submitted a pre-application enquiry proposing a two storey building to replace the existing cafe – Figure 7. Detailed advice was received from the Council’s Design Officer, Principal Conservation Officer and summarised by Planning Officer Emily Stanbridge on 11th February 2022 - PRE2021/00165 – see Appendix. The design submitted at pre-app differed from the now submitted proposals in a number of key ways. Images comparing the pre-application and application schemes are contained in Figures 7 to 10 below.
- 5.2 The Officers agreed with the principle of redeveloping the site, with the extended footprint, and with the contemporary architectural approach. They drew attention to the scale and massing of the replacement building, advising that they considered two storeys to be excessive for the site as it would be overly dominant and harm the setting of nearby listed structures and their significance.
- 5.3 More minor criticisms included the misalignment of the new building with the Peace Statue and the flat roof form. The Officers opined that the inclusion of a roof terrace at the front (north) side of the building could not be supported because it would introduce activity above ground level on the most visible elevation of the building.
- 5.4 The concerns raised at pre-application stage have been addressed in the planning application:
1. Building centrally aligned with bollards and Peace Statue
 2. A pitched roof form has been introduced on the front – north – elevation of the building.
 3. Two storeys replaced with a single storey building, with pitched and gabled roof on the north elevation, and roof terrace to the rear. The 7.5 metre deep roof ensures that the roof terrace is entirely hidden from viewpoints north of the building, which is the setting of the majority of the listed structures.
 4. The overall height of the cafe building is reduced to 3.7 metres to the top of the flat roof and roof terrace. The maximum height of the building on the north elevation, including the multi-ridge roof is 5.72 metres. This significant height reduction from the pre-application scheme addresses the Design and Conservation Officers’ concerns

regarding the impact of the scale on locally listed Hove Lawns and nearby listed buildings, within the setting of which the proposed development falls.

5. Above ground activity is removed from the north elevation, and the roof terrace contained behind a raised roofline, as recommended by the Officers.

5.5 The revised scheme responds positively to the constructive advice received at pre-application stage and further information on how this has been achieved is detailed in Section 7 below.



Figure 3: 3D Render of the Proposed Cafe Building, with Peace Statue.



Figure 4: Aerial view of cafe, showing terrace hidden on north side of the roof



Figure 5: Looking south, with Embassy Court in the background



Figure 6: 3D Render, showing seating area with bi-fold doors open in summer



Figure 7: Pre-application scheme: two storeys.



Figure 8: Re-designed scheme, now submitted.

(All renders are the copyright of Narch Design & Build)



Figure 9: Pre-application scheme, bird's eye view



Figure 10: Submitted scheme, bird's eye view

6.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 The local development plan for the area comprises the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 1 (CPP1) and saved policies in the 2006 Brighton & Hove Local Plan (BHLP). Policies in the Proposed Submission Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 2 (CPP2) can be given weight in view of the Plan's advanced stage of preparation.

6.2 The 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration.

6.3 The site is on the border of the Regency and Brunswick Conservation Areas (CA), and proximate to a number of listed buildings and structures, and the locally listed Hove Lawns.

6.4 Relevant CPP1 policies:

- SA1 The Seafront
- CP2 Sustainable Economic Development
- CP5 Culture and Tourism
- CP8 Sustainable Buildings
- CP12 Urban Design
- CP13 Public Streets and Spaces
- CP15 Heritage

6.5 Relevant BHLP policies:

- QD5 Street frontages
- QD27 Protection of amenity
- HE6 Development affecting Conservation Areas
- SR12 Large Use Class A3 Restaurants and Cafes

6.6 The following policies in CPP2 can be given weight:

- DM18 High quality design and places
- DM20 Protection of Amenity
- DM26 Conservation Areas
- DM29 Setting of heritage assets
- DM39 Development on the seafront

6.7 *CPP1 SA1* seeks the on-going regeneration of the seafront. This includes enhancing the public realm, ensuring adequate facilities for residents and visitors, high quality architecture and urban design, and the preservation and enhancement of the

Conservation Areas. *CP5* is a linked policy, which works to create a “modern and exciting visitor destination with a range of high quality facilities”.

- 6.8 The Meeting Place Cafe sits squarely in the public realm, being visible from all directions, and at a distance from Hove Lawns and the esplanade. *CP13* seeks to improve the quality, legibility and accessibility of the city’s public realm through, *inter alia*, enhancing local distinctiveness and conserving built heritage.
- 6.9 *CP12 Urban Design* expects development to raise the standards of architecture in the city, establish a strong sense of place by respecting the diverse character of neighbourhoods, integrate external spaces into design approaches, and enhance the city’s built environment.
- 6.10 *BHLP QD27 and CPP2 DM1: Protection of Amenity* seeks to protect the amenity of existing and future occupiers of sites and neighbouring premises affected by development.
- 6.11 The site lies within both the Regency Square and Brunswick Town Conservation Areas, although the existing built structure is entirely within the Regency Square Conservation Area. LPAs have a duty under s72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.
- 6.12 *CP15 Heritage* seeks to conserve and enhance the city’s historic environment. *BHLP HE6 and CPP2 DM26* require proposals within or affecting the setting of Conservation Areas to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area, show a consistently high standard of design and detailing, use of sympathetic building materials and finishes, and removal of unsightly and inappropriate features.
- 6.13 *CPP2 DM39* is concerned with the susceptibility of development on the seafront to coastal erosion. Layout, design and materials should take account of this and be resilient to the effects of the coastal environment.
- 6.14 Saved *Local Plan policy SR12* advises that A3 uses over 150 sqm will be permitted provided they meet four criteria relating to distance from other A3 establishments and residential properties, potential to cause nuisance and disturbance, and impact on parking.

7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 In recent years, many of the well known landmark buildings along Brighton and Hove seafront have been refurbished or comprehensively redeveloped. The seafront is the city's main visitor attraction, and if the city is to retain its position as one of England's best loved and visited seaside resorts its regeneration efforts need to provide modern facilities whilst preserving its iconic buildings and spaces.
- 7.2 CPP1 policy SA1 specifically aims to this transformation of the seafront area. The new cafe will meet the policy's objectives, including better facilities for resident and visitors. Hove Lawns and esplanade is especially popular with local residents, who gravitate to the promenade all year round.
- 7.3 Successful architecture embodies the history and traditions of a particular location. Taking note of the advice received at pre-application stage, the design of the new Meeting Place Cafe has been amended to include elements that echo the existing building, most notably its saw tooth roof.
- 7.4 The contemporary architectural approach has been successfully employed elsewhere along the seafront, such as at Rockwater further west and Brighton Beach Club (formerly the Milkmaid Pavilion). The design approach will replace what is an increasingly dated beach cafe reminiscent of the 1960s beach holiday with a modern, sleek building that embodies quality urban design.
- 7.5 The design strikes a balance between preserving the existing views along the seafront and creating a building that is eye catching enough to raise the standard of architecture, in accordance with CP12. By incorporating the right amount of local distinctiveness, the quality of the public realm would also be enhanced, as per CP13.
- 7.6 The site is sensitive due to the wide open vistas across Hove Lawns and the sea, punctuated by a number of listed structures, which have extensive settings that need to be preserved. The preservation of the setting of the Grade II listed Peace Statue is particularly important, and to this end the height of the building has been kept low so as not to compete with the elegant outline of the memorial statue. As the Conservation Officer noted, two storeys would have been a dramatic divergence from that of the historic seafront structures.
- 7.7 Heeding this advice, the proposed building is single storey with pitched roof to the front, north, elevation that mirrors the more pronounced saw tooth profile of the current cafe's

roof. All rooftop activity would be contained behind the roof, as recommended by Ms Johnson in her comments of 31st January 2022. In so doing, the roof terrace and its related activity will not detract from the significance of the nearby heritage assets (statue, railings and shelters), nor impact on their settings. Further information on the impact on heritage assets is contained in section 8.

- 7.8 It is considered that the proposal complies with the various design policies in the development plan. The building's scale and form is sensitive to need to protect the openness of the surrounding townscape and long views (CP15, HE6, DM26). The contemporary design is compatible with the location, and is designed to a high level of details, enhancing local distinctiveness and raising the quality of architecture in the city (CP12, CP13).
- 7.9 CPP1 policy CP2 seeks to retain and support existing businesses, making the city's economy more resilient. It also notes the importance of non-B Class uses to the city economy, which includes Class E food and drink (formerly A3) uses such as the Meeting Place Cafe. Currently, all the cafe's seating is outside. The drawbacks of this are clear. Being directly in the path of the elements, the seating is only useable in good weather. One of the main drivers of the redevelopment from a business perspective is the opportunity to bring customer seating inside so that it is welcoming all year round. In so doing, the projected return on investment makes the whole project financially viable in the longer term.
- 7.10 The cafe redevelopment will require an increase in staff numbers as it will enable the business to serve more customers throughout the year, both seated and take away. Providing new employment opportunities supports economic growth in the city, in accordance with paragraph 81 of the Framework.
- 7.11 The site is removed from any other users whose amenity could be affected by the development. There are no sensitive nearby users who could be affected by overlooking from the proposed roof terrace.
- 7.12 With regards to saved Local Plan policy SR12, the proposal does not constitute a new A3 use but can be considered an 'extension' of an existing premises, so SR12 applies, if with somewhat reduced weight due to its age in relation to the 2021 Framework.
- 7.13 The proposal is considered to be acceptable under SR12. The Meeting Place Cafe is 300 metres from the next nearest restaurant, the Brighton Beach Club in the east, and although

within 400 metres the redevelopment of the Meeting Place Cafe would not result in an oversupply of cafes in the area. Brighton Beach Club is a restaurant with a totally different clientele, and does not compete with the Meeting Place Cafe (SR12, criterion a). The cafe is removed from residential properties (b). The proposals would not be likely to cause a nuisance or disturbance by way of noise within the premises (c) or public disorder or disturbance due to late night activities as the cafe is a daytime establishment (d). SR12 is therefore met.

8.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

8.1 NPPF paragraph 194 advises that applicants should describe the significance of designated heritage assets and the affect that development will have on that significance. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas (CA).

Statement of Significance

8.2 The proposed development is in the Regency Square CA and abuts the Brunswick Town CA. It is also within the setting of two Grade II listed seafront shelters, the Grade II listed Edward VII Memorial Monument and the locally listed Hove Lawns. The Grade I Brunswick Terrace and Grade II* Embassy Court are further from the site, however their settings would be affected, albeit to a lesser extent, by the redevelopment of the Meeting Place Cafe.

8.3 The open space alongside Hove Lawns that gives wide, far-reaching views east and west along the seafront give significance to the setting of these heritage assets. The significance of these designated and non-designated heritage assets is therefore derived in a large part from their setting, encompassing the uninterrupted views across Hove Lawns and out over the English Channel. As the Council's Principal Conservation Officer, Lesley Johnson, noted in her pre-application advice regarding the Regency Square CA:

“Amongst the grand streets and squares there are a few intimate spaces, such as the mews and alleys, however the greatest contrast is the seafront, which offers views eastwards to the Palace Pier and westwards as far as Worthing.”

8.4 The magnificence of Brunswick Terrace and, further afield, Adelaide Crescent, are accentuated by the openness of Hove Lawns, which were laid out to provide the setting for these grand set pieces of Regency architecture. The absence of tall buildings along Hove esplanade preserves this uninterrupted space as far as Connaught Mansions. As the Conservation Officer noted, the formality and order of the Brunswick Town estate extends to the openness of the lawns and seafront, which are uninterrupted by structures.

8.5 There are examples of a small number of standalone buildings of smaller scale between Kings Road and the beach, situated on the lower level east of the Peace Statue. Lesley Johnson notes,

“King's Road is fronted by the wide pedestrian Esplanade overlooking a series of recreational spaces at a lower level, which in turn form the margin of the beach. The Bandstand and Milkmaid Pavilion provide punctuation rather than visual obstructions, (particularly due to being positioned within the beach zone rather than on the esplanade) and they are eye-catchers due to their design and detailing rather than their size.”

Considering Potential Impacts

- 8.6 To preserve this important character of the CA, the proposed cafe would be single storey in height so as not obstruct the sweeping views along the seafront and towards the Regency terraces and squares. As the proposal would replace the existing, somewhat dated and tired looking cafe, it is considered that there would be a neutral impact on setting. Although the footprint would be larger, the proposed replacement building has been designed with simple, clean lines and finished in a muted colour palette, to reduce the potential for it to compete visually with the Edward VII Memorial Monument, the setting of which provides for clear views of the statue against expansive skies and the sea.
- 8.7 Furthermore, although having a greater floor area, the development will remove the outdoor seating area on the west of the cafe. This area is surrounded by plastic wind breaks, which together with tables, chairs and parasols, amount to an incongruous and unattractive addition to the streetscape – see Figure11. The removal of A-boards at the front of the premises is another opportunity to tidy up the site.
- 8.8 This paraphernalia will be replaced with a single storey building not dissimilar in height to the existing cafe. The monument and further afield, Brunswick Terrace, will remain the focus in the visual envelope. The simple, clean lines and beige tones of the replacement cafe building help to ensure that it will not compete visually with the statue and other heritage assets around the site. Figures 12 and 13 show the proposal in relation to the Edward VII Memorial Monument, and with Brunswick Terrace and Embassy Court, and Hove Lawns, which are a locally listed non-designated heritage asset.



Figure 11: The existing cafe building. The plastic windbreaks around the outdoor seating area are visible in the background



Figure 12: 3D Render showing the relationship between the proposed cafe and the Edward VII Memorial Monument ('the Peace Statue')



Figure 13: Proposed Cafe, with Brunswick Terrace and Embassy Court in background

- 8.9 NPPF paragraphs 199 – 202 require that an assessment of the impact of the development on designated heritage assets should be undertaken. The analysis provided above concludes that no harm, including less than substantial harm, would result. Indeed the proposal could be considered to result in an enhancement to the setting, due to the removal of ground level cafe paraphernalia and the existing cafe being replaced by a suitably scaled and designed, high quality building.
- 8.10 There would be no harm to the character and appearance of the two Conservation Areas, nor to the setting of nearby listed and non-listed heritage assets. As the proposal preserves the character and setting of the Conservation Areas and setting of surrounding listed buildings, it is justified in heritage terms.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 Planning Permission is sought for the demolition of the existing cafe building at the Meeting Place Cafe, Kings Esplanade, Hove, with a new, 384sqm cafe. The replacement building would be single storey with roof terrace to the rear, hidden behind a low, pitched roof.
- 9.2 The new cafe will provide indoor seating for 88 customers, a large kitchen with four serving hatches for take away trade, and a roof terrace with a further 36 covers. The redevelopment will greatly improve the facilities at the cafe. Currently, there is no indoor seating, only a make shift seating area for non-take away customers, consisting of plastic tables and chairs and windbreak set up on the esplanade.
- 9.3 Brighton & Hove Officers supported the principle of comprehensive redevelopment of the cafe at pre-application stage. A number of concerns were raised, all of which are addressed by the amendments made since then.
- 9.4 The proposal has been significantly re-scaled, reducing the height from two to one storey, so that it does not harm the setting of nearby listed and locally listed heritage assets. The roof terrace has been retained and would be shielded from listed assets with a low roof provided over the front (north) part of the building.
- 9.5 The development will enable the business to serve a greater number of customers, both eat in and take away, and provide a more pleasant and welcoming environment. An increase in staff will be required to do this, so the proposal will have direct economic benefits for the city.
- 9.6 The proposal would not result in an over-supply of Class E food and drink uses in the immediate area, and would not increase the potential for noise and disturbance.
- 9.7 An assessment of the proposal's impact on the significance of nearby heritage assets and their settings concludes that there would be no harm, and it could potential enhance setting.
- 9.8 For these reasons Brighton & Hove City Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposal without undue delay.

Appendix
Pre-application Advice from Brighton & Hove City Council