

Comments on proposed hotel development in Cannon Place Brighton

1. The Regency Society is Brighton and Hove's oldest and largest civic society. We are pleased to comment on the pre-application proposals for Cannon Place.
2. The site is located in the heart of central Brighton, close to many important heritage buildings. At present the southern section of Cannon Place is bleak and unattractive. A development of this scale provides the opportunity to improve its appearance, making it more welcoming to residents and visitors.
3. We welcome the proposed restoration 31-32 Cannon Place, and in particular the opening up of the entrance to the original Newburgh Assembly Rooms. However, we would like to suggest that the proposed additional mansard should be set further back to line up with the upper floors of the new building to the south.
4. Turning to the new building itself, we feel that its somewhat "blocky" design would result in a lost opportunity; we would like to see a coherent street-scene created by means of design features which show respect for the Regency period buildings to the north. In addition, we would suggest reducing the overall height by at least one floor and possibly mansarding the top floor.
5. Cannon Place is a pedestrian route from the station to the Metropole and Grand hotels and other important destinations. The footway on the west side, adjacent to the Metropole, is unfriendly to pedestrians, particularly those pulling suitcases. The information provided suggests that the new development will make this situation worse. A radical re-design is needed to improve the pedestrian route. The City Council's Supplementary Planning Document 01 identifies the need for an "improved pedestrian environment" in Cannon Place so the local authority should be supportive.
6. The same document also calls for improvements "to the blank eastside elevation of the Metropole...". The proposed new hotel building will help to achieve this. However, the current drawings suggest that the southern section of this blank elevation will remain as it is. The developer should take this opportunity to improve the appearance of the whole eastside elevation south from St Margaret's Place.
7. St Margaret's Place is a much-abused residential street with several listed buildings. The abuse arises from its use as a loading bay for the Metropole exhibition halls. The drawings provided suggest that one of the loading bays will remain at the eastern end. We question why.
8. In fact we would suggest that the planning authority's ability to make a fully-informed decision about this scheme will require a clear understanding of the intentions for the rest of the site, including the full length of St Margaret's Place, and the exhibition halls in Queensbury Mews. We suggest that the full planning application should include a master plan for the site bounded by Kings Road, Queensbury Mews, St Margaret's Place and Cannon Place.
9. Thank you for the opportunity to comment at this stage. We look forward to seeing more detailed plans in due course.

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