

# Seafront Attractions, The Esplanade, Weymouth

## Heritage Statement



### BACKGROUND

The application site is a relative extensive area of Weymouth Beach which lies within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area, which is covered by The Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal (WTCCACA).

The appraisal states: -

*The Conservation Area is a key component of an outstanding historic town and one of the prime assets for the future development of Weymouth as a high-quality tourism destination and a focus for inward investment. The Esplanade is of national significance in the history of the seaside resort and in terms of social history. Its older buildings and layout plan are an important example of late Georgian architecture and town planning. The Medieval core of Melcombe Regis has a virtually intact grid plan and there are many attractive Georgian and Victorian buildings*

Buildings along The Esplanade are typically 3 and 4 storeys with some having lower basements. Many that were originally private houses are now holiday accommodation or commercial, with several having more modern ground floor frontages.

Looking north and south along The Esplanade give views of the historic terraces and other significant features and buildings such as the Promenade Shelters, Jubilee Clock, Pier Bandstand, Alexandra Gardens and Pavilion. The sweep of the Bay is best appreciated from a distance and particularly from the sea and as noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal (WTCCACA) -



## LISTED BUILDING EXTRACTS

### **King's Statue**

Grade I

*Freestanding monument to George III. Erected 1809/10, to designs of James Hamilton, architect. The figures and detail in Coade stone, said to be the work of Mr Sealy, of the firm of Coade and Sealy, on a massive Portland stone pedestal. The King, in Garter robes, holds the sceptre in his right hand, and is backed by various insignia, including, to his right, the crown on a cushion, Royal standard and Union flag; to his left are a pile of books and a large oval shield of arms. These items are all brightly coloured, and stand on a cavetto base with roll-mould, on a lofty rectangular pedestal with moulded capping and base, on a plinth in 2 high steps. To each side is a further low pedestal, not coursed or bonded to the main stonework, carrying fine gilded figures; to the King's right a lion, and to his left a unicorn. The front, which faces N along the length of the Esplanade, has an inscription in large letters: 'The grateful Inhabitants/ To GEORGE THE THIRD/ On his entering the 50th Year/ Of His REIGN'; immediately below, in lettering almost as bold is 'J.HAMILTON ARCHT'. The back of the pedestal, in a corresponding location, bears a long inscription, considerably worn, and legible only in part. This inscription has been transcribed to a smaller Portland stone tablet set at the base, at the front. Amongst other information is the date (18 October 1809) of a general meeting, with James Bower, Mayor, in the chair, at which various resolutions were passed, including 'A congratulatory address...' and 'That Public Dinners and general illuminations are ill adapted to this occasion or the awful times in which we live....' Instead, a public subscription would be raised, partly '....to contribute to the comfort of our Poorer Brethren .....and Prisoners of War....' half of the proceeds to each of these worthy causes. In addition 'That (sundry named persons) being possessed of a statue of our excellent king... offered to present it..' A separate subscription would be raised for this, and the committee given full powers to find a site and erect it. The lettering is all splendidly set out and incised, and, like the principal inscription, is painted black. This splendid memorial has a commanding location, but now serves as part of a traffic island. The monument has not always been appreciated: in a long report of January 1886 in *The Southern Times*, reviewing the unveiling of the statue to Sir Henry Edwardes (qv), further to the S on the Esplanade, the journalist contrasted the new statue with '.... that hideous monstrosity known as the King's Statue, about the removal of which many schemes have been from time to time suggested....' (RCHME: Dorset, South-East: London: 1970-: 338; *Buildings of England*: Newman J & Pevsner N: Dorset: London: 1972-: 453).*

### **Statue House, Johnstone Row (Terrace), 66 and 67, Esplanade**

Grade II\*

*Pair of houses, now one property, at end of terrace, returning to St Mary Street. c1815 (RCHME). Rendered, slate roof. PLAN: a single house at the end of Johnstone Row (Nos 60-65 (qv)), and a slightly inset bowed end facing N along the Esplanade. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attic and basement. No.66 has 2 flat-roofed dormers above a replacement window at second floor over a 12-pane sash, with, to the right, a full-height bowed oriel with 6:9:6-pane sashes above 8:12:8-pane to ground and first floors. The basement has a paired sash behind vertical iron bars under the oriel. To the left, on 5 stone steps with nosings is an original 6-panel door under a painted-in fanlight in an arch in 2 orders. This part of the property is detailed as for the adjoining 6 houses, but retaining more of the original detail. The bold rounded N end is slightly set in from No.66, but on the return to St Mary Street sets back by a flat wall to the*

rear of No.66. The curved mansard roof has 2 flat-roofed dormers, above 6:9:6 and 8:12:8-pane flat bows, with a 9-pane and 12-pane sash centred between. Ground floor, under a continuous inflected entablature with dentil cornice (there are some breaks in the dentil run), has fluted Doric pilasters on high pedestals taken to the level of the ground floor. From the left, this covers a blank panel, boarded in, and fine early display bows in 45 panes with deep tapered glazing bars, each side of a square projecting portico with a large arched 9-pane window facing N, and part-glazed doors with radial fanlights each side, on flights of 5 nosed stone steps contained in a pierced stone balustrade. The entablature is carried round the portico, which has fluted wood Doric columns, and pilaster responds. Beyond the second display window is a blank panel, corresponding to that on the opposite side, but with an inserted door at low level. The basement has windows behind vertical bars each side of the portico. A mid band, and moulded cornice to blocking-course and coped parapet. The right-hand end stops to a flat pilaster, and returns to the flat rear wall. A large ridge stack at the rear of the bowed mansard. A single-storey shop unit is attached to the S end, facing St Mary Street. This has panelled pilasters and prominent consoles with ball finials, with a cast-iron cresting to the fascia with moulded cornice. A central pair of glazed doors. INTERIOR: substantially modified, and retains little original detail. Statue House is splendid urban theatre externally, combining with No.1 Coburg Place (qv) and the King's Statue (qv), from which the name derives, to provide a fitting setting to the S end of the main promenade. (RCHME: Dorset, South-East: London: 1970-: 354).

### **Devonshire Buildings (Terrace), 1-6, Esplanade**

Grade II\*

Terrace of 6 houses. c1805-1819 (RCHME). Flemish bond brickwork, slate mansard roofs. The terrace, at the extreme S end of the Esplanade, has double-fronted houses at either end, with singles between, and is finished at the E end with a full-height rounded bow, said to have replaced the original house. The rear has been relatively little changed or rextended, except for No.1, with a 3-storey C20 addition. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attic and basement. 14 flat-roofed dormers with 6-pane sashes, above 14 nine-pane sashes at second floor, and 2-storey 8:12:8-pane sash oriels, with a fine dentil cornice at the top only. The sashes have splayed painted lintels. A plain plinth to ground-floor level, a moulded cornice, with rendered blocking course and stone parapet, plus 6 sashes at first floor. The basements have a paired sash with central mullion, set back under the oriel. There are six 6-panel doors under plain fanlights in a brick arched reveal in 2 orders. A flight of 5 stone steps, some with nosings, and with a simple wrought-iron rail, rises to each door. There are paired stacks to the doubled mansard with central valley to Nos 3-6, and a single stack to No.2, which is less deep than the remainder, with a single roof. At the E end the rounded end is rendered, with 12 above 16 and 16-pane sash in plain reveals. The cornice and parapet are returned to this end. At the W end, adjoining Pulteney Buildings (qv), there is a one bay return with blind openings, that to the ground floor being arched. The back is in brickwork, with 4 small dormers directly above glazing bar sashes at 3 levels, plus 2 deep stair sashes. At the E end the building steps back in 2 sections, one of these with 3 sashes flanked by C20 flat-roofed extensions. INTERIOR: No.1, The Roundhouse, has a full-height stick baluster stair, and retains some original cornices. This is the terrace which starts the great sweep of the Esplanade running to the N. It has retained most of the original detail externally, and has not been subject to the commercial changes which have occurred nearer the centre of C20

seaside activity. A small number of windows only have lost glazing bars. (RCHME: Dorset, South-East: London: 1970-: 353).

### **Pulteney Buildings (Terrace), 7-12, Esplanade**

Grade II\*

*Formerly known as: Nos.1-6 ESPLANADE. Terrace of 6 houses. c1805. Flemish bond brickwork, slate roofs. A series of one-room double-depth houses, with a double mansard roof to central valley, set at an obtuse angle to and slightly forward from Devonshire Buildings (qv) to the left. There is also a straight joint in the brickwork between Nos 7 & 8. It seems likely that this terrace was built before Devonshire Buildings (qv), and that at first a gap was left between the 2 units, later filled by No.7. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys, attic and basement, each 2 windows, all glazing-bar sashes with splayed painted lintels and stone sills; flat-roofed dormers with 6-pane, 9-pane at second floor, a 2-storey flat oriel bow with 8:12:8-pane to the left, and a 12-pane to the right above an arched doorway in 2 orders over a 6-panel door with plain fanlight, on 4 or 5 stone steps with nosings. At basement level, in the plane of the main wall, are paired 4-pane, except to Nos 7 & 12, which have wide 24-pane sashes. A stone cornice with bold cyma mould, blocking course, and parapet; each house has paired deep stacks to the right party wall. The basement areas are contained by square section wood railings, returned on the level to the doorways. The backs are little changed. Originally each house had a small gabled service wing, which remains to Nos 9 & 10, with various modifications and extensions to the others. Each has a central single raking dormer with sash (No.12 has a wider dormer with paired sash), and 3 have laylights to the left. Below is a 12-pane sash above a canted oriel, extended up to the second floor in No.10, and down to the ground floor in No.12. To the left of each oriel is a deep 15-pane stair window. INTERIOR: not inspected. This terrace is practically unaltered externally, and, in conjunction with the adjacent and contemporaneous Devonshire Buildings, provides a worthy starting group for the long Esplanade stretching to the N. (RCHME: Dorset, South-East: London: 1970-: 353).*

### **PROPOSAL**

Planning Permission ref. WP/18/00010/VOC was granted on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018 for: -

*Arrangement and design of beach attractions and kiosks (variation of condition 2 of planning permission 10/00118/FUL3 regarding size and location details of facilities).*

This was a variation of an earlier permission ref. 10/00118/FUL3 for: -

*Arrangement and design of beach attractions and kiosks*

The approved plans for the 2018 permission are listed in condition 1 of the decision notice and these indicate the location of catering (SC) and retail (R) kiosks and attractions (A) along the beach. Condition 2 on the decision notice includes a table with various size and height limits for each location.

It is proposed to relocate the attraction sites A3 and A4 and combine these with site A5 to be tendered as one site. The new site would be 60m x 25m giving a total area of 1500m. The site would include similar height limits to the existing sites. This site would be seasonal as the existing sites.

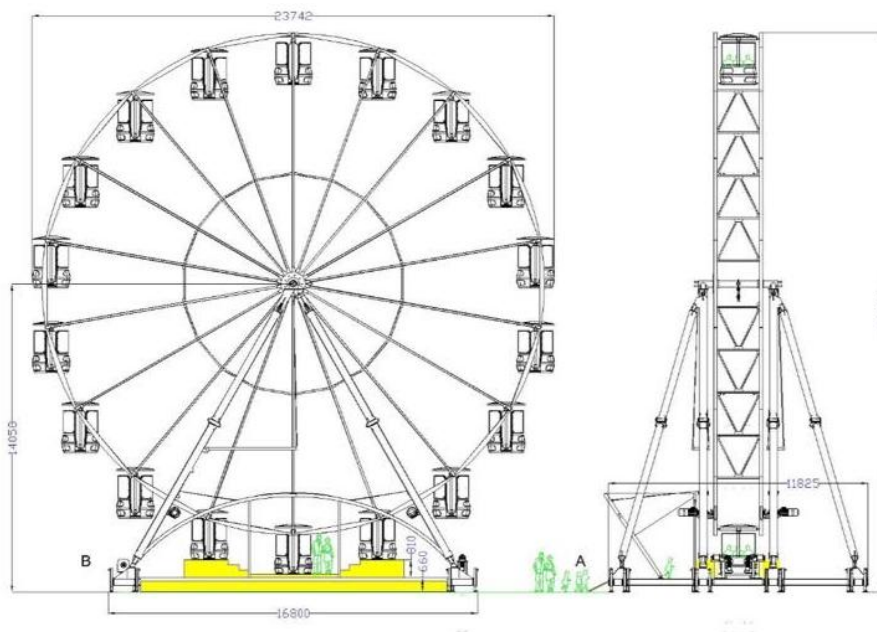
It is also proposed to provide an Observation Wheel on the current A6 site, the details of which would be: -

- No higher than 33m
- At least one accessible gondola
- Target market families/older people
- Similar to the wheel at Skegness (see below photo)
- White in colour
- No concrete foundations required



*Skegness Observation Wheel*

The detail of the proposed wheel would be similar to those below, although the exact dimensions would vary dependent on the supplier.



## **IMPACT OF PROPOSAL**

The Esplanade is a significant Heritage asset falling within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area with the many listed buildings fronting The Esplanade. Weymouth beach has long been established as an area with many beach attractions and tourist facilities which contribute to the character of this part of Weymouth. Many of the attractions are however seasonal which means the beach and Esplanade have a more tranquil character during winter months. The beach is separated from the listed terraces of The Esplanade by the highway, which reduces the impact of the beach attractions on their setting.

The re-arrangement of the attractions at sites A3, A4 and A5 aim to achieve less clutter spread across the beach, which is an issue that has been raised in the Town Council's seafront strategy consultation. The revised arrangement of the attractions would also provide a more themed approach on one site recognising the seafront tradition and heritage; and easier management for the Council and operator. As the attractions themselves will not be changed but merely repositioned the overall impact on the setting of heritage assets will be minimal.

The proposed observation wheel would be located amongst the various existing seafront attractions along the seafront, including the sand sculpture building and Alexandra Gardens fun fair within close proximity. The proposed structure would have an increased height and therefore will be more striking and visible along The Esplanade.

To minimise any impact the following design features and details are proposed

- siting from 1<sup>st</sup> March 31<sup>st</sup> to October each year
- wheel to be white in colour,
- white lighting
- orientated with the circular face of the wheel towards Alexandra Gardens and the sea and gondolas facing towards the beach office and pavilion
- associated structures e.g. ticket booths, surfacing etc. integrated with the wheel

Given the location is within close proximity to Listed Buildings along The Esplanade and within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area, the observation wheel would have some impact on the setting of these heritage assets. The wheel would however provide a new and interesting attraction for Weymouth which would be beneficial to the economy of the town.

## **CONCLUSION**

Weymouth seafront is an appropriate location for the types of seaside attraction proposed, some of which have been in place for many years. The observation wheel will however be significantly larger and taller than the other structures along the beach. With this in mind it is proposed to be removed from the beach over the winter months which will allow a greater appreciation of the genteel and historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area at this time of year. The wheel will also be orientated parallel to The Esplanade and white in colour to minimise the impact on the wider area.

The relocation of sites A3 and A4 would be beneficial in reducing the spread of attractions along the beach. Sites A3 and A4 would be deleted and A5 amended to be enlarged but would include the previous height restrictions. Site A6 would remain the same site area with the provision of the taller Observation Wheel. The proposed minor material amendments to the previous planning permission are considered to be acceptable within the Conservation Area and setting of nearby Listed Buildings. The beach attractions are part of the character of Weymouth seafront and the surrounding area and what is expected in a seaside resort during the summer months. Similar Observation Wheels can be seen in many resorts and cities throughout the country.

The level of harm would be “less than substantial” which would be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal in providing facilities for local residents and visitors and supporting the local economy.