

3. Design Strategy

Design Principles

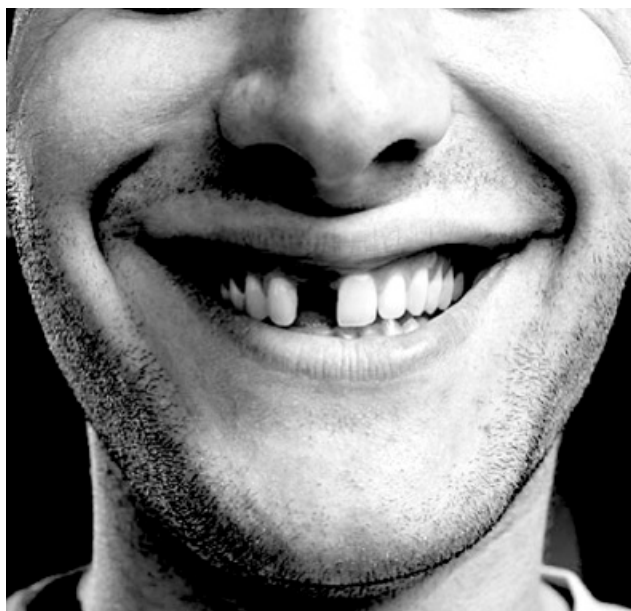
1. Repairing the block

Since the demolition of the Savoy Buildings and the subsequent fire that destroyed Savoy Court, the current vacant site has been a 'missing tooth' on the South Parade Seafront. The first priority of our design has been to repair this gap and stitch back together the urban fabric of this part of Southsea. Whilst restoring the seafront is the most important part of this, we have also needed to think carefully about how to link the building back into the side streets on either side.

The buildings behind the site on Clarendon Road were formerly called St Helen's Park Crescent. This row of houses is set back significantly from the street and would once have had a green space between the houses and the street. In order to marry the seafront development with this crescent of houses behind we have chosen to respect the building line of these houses and set back our building from Clarendon Road. This reduces the overall width of the development along the seafront. This has the advantage of providing oblique sea views to the new apartments facing Clarendon Road whilst also improving the sea views for everyone else on Clarendon Road.

The Figure / Ground Plans on this page show the urban grain of the site as it exists currently, as it would be if the extant planning permission was implemented and as it would be with the current proposals.

We have aimed to provide a building that restores the continuity of Southsea's seafront facade to provide a backdrop to the life of the beach, the promenade and the pier.



Current Site Layout



Extant Consented Scheme



Current Proposals

Design Principles

2. Sea Views

The extraordinary sea views are the most important asset of the site and provide an important driver for our design approach for this project. The particular quality of light along this stretch of coast inspired some of JMW Turner's most dramatic seascape paintings. The seafront's Southerly aspect overlooking the Solent, combined with the light colours of the seafront buildings and beach, give a very distinctive characteristic to the light here.

The proposals for the site that were granted Planning Permission in 2007, set out to maximise the width of the development along the seafront (see diagram bottom left). While this strategy maximises the number of apartments along the seafront, it reduces any opportunities for sea views for apartments to the side of the development along Clarendon Road.

One of our earliest moves was to set the building line back from Clarendon Road, reducing the length of the seafront block to allow oblique view of the sea from apartments facing Clarendon Road (see diagram bottom right). This allows us to maximise the number of new apartments benefitting from the sea view whilst also improving the sea views for all of the existing properties on Clarendon Road.

We have also strived, in the layout of the apartments, to ensure that as many apartments as possible enjoy the sea views. We have positioned the communal lounge and dining spaces within the building in locations that enjoy good sea views.

As well as maximising sea views from the internal spaces we have designed the position and layout of the shared external spaces to ensure that residents can enjoy the sea view and Southwesterly sunshine from the gardens.



1. Sea View from South Parade



2. JMW Turner - Disembarkation of Louis-Philippe



3. Extant Consented Scheme



4. Current Proposals

Design Principles

3. Green Space

By setting the proposed building back we can provide a new garden between the new building and Clarendon Road which links visually to the open space in front of the St Helen's Park Crescent beyond. The new garden with a view of the horizon beyond will be a major enhancement to Clarendon Road. This type of green space, running perpendicular to the sea front and allowing oblique sea views, has a number of precedents in Regency Brighton and Hove.

The two images below show Regency Square, Hove. The layout of the square opens up views of the sea for the buildings running perpendicular to the seafront and brings the benefit of the seafront further back into the town.

The proposed shared garden has a number of benefits:

- It provides privacy and separation from the street, for the ground floor apartments facing Clarendon Road.
- Provides an attractive green space that improves the setting of this part of the Conservation Area.
- It provides daytime activity along the street and natural surveillance.
- It screens the raised ground floor of the Clarendon Road block which is lifted approximately 1.3m above pavement level to avoid flood risks.



Proposed site layout



Above and to the right: Regency Square, Brighton



Design Principles

4. Scale and Massing

The proposed building has been designed to relate to the height and scale of the surrounding buildings. The Main seafront building is seven storeys: five storeys on the street frontage and a further two storeys set back from the facade at roof level. The building is similar in scale to the adjacent hotel. The building height will be broadly in line with that of the previously consented scheme, which although only six storeys assumed greater floor to ceiling height internally to tie in with the former Savoy Court.

To the rear of the site the building steps down to reflect the lower scale of the streets behind. The Clarendon Road wing is five storeys with four storeys on the main building line and a set back floor at roof level.

The massing of the building has been broken up and articulated in a number of ways to give it a scale in keeping with the surrounding buildings.

Set backs

The upper floors on both Clarendon Road and South Parade have been set back from the main building line by at least 2m. This will substantially reduce their impact when viewed from the street. The set back has been increased further on Alhambra Road to respect the change in scale of the buildings on this street.

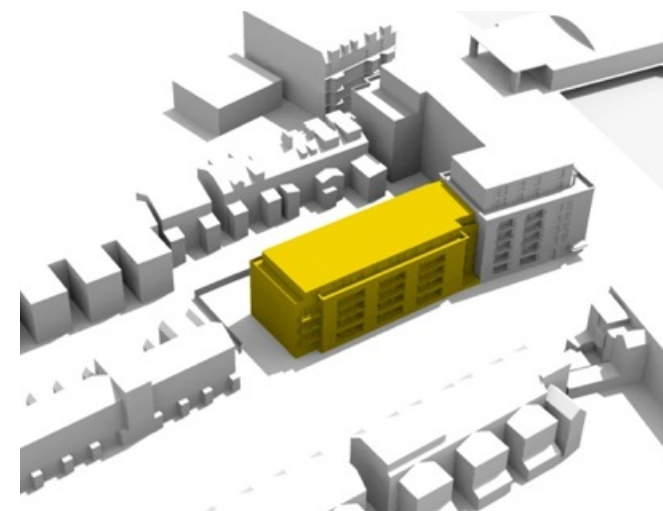
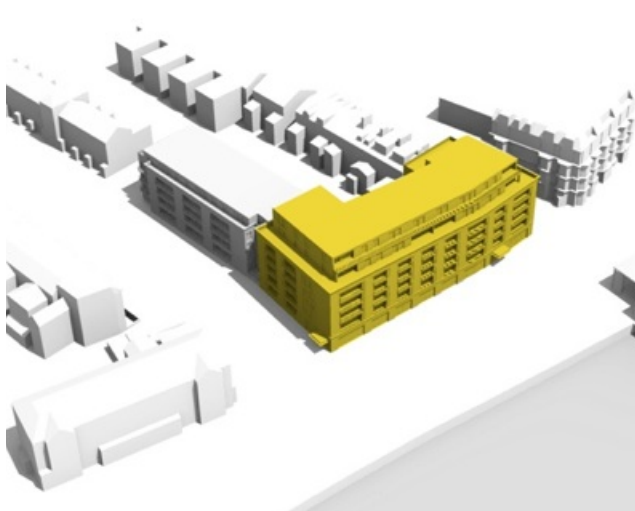
Openings and recesses

The proposed window openings are more generous than those of typical retirement apartments to make the most of the particular views and provide plenty of light. Balconies (provided to all apartments) are recessed where possible rather than projecting. This offers a more sheltered and hence usable external space for the residents as well as providing depth and modelling to the facade.



Below: The South Parade Block is highlighted. This element is seven storeys in total with five storeys on the street frontage and a further two storeys set back at roof level. This part of the building ties in with the scale of the Royal Beach hotel next door.

*Above: Section through the Clarendon Road Block
Below: The Clarendon Road block has been highlighted. This part of the building is four storeys with an additional set back roof storey tying in with the scale of Clarendon Road. The sketch cross section above shows how the scale of the building relates to the streets.*



Design Principles

5. Flood Resilience

Analysis produced by our specialist flood consultants has indicated that the site is in an area of 'high probability' of coastal flooding and that the proposed development will need to take on board flood mitigation measures. The design has addressed this in a number of ways:

1. All residential floors have been raised above the maximum anticipated 100 year flood level. This should avoid any potential damage to residents homes and ensure that they can remain safely in their apartments at times of coastal flooding. The diagram below shows how ground floor apartments have been raised up by approximately 1.3m above the main entrance level to achieve this.
2. Non residential areas that remain below the maximum flood level will be designed with resilient finishes and flood protection measures.



6. Defensible Space / Active Frontage

In designing this building we have set out to ensure that the internal uses of the building are arranged in a way that supports the principles of good placemaking.

Where we have residential units at ground floor level they are separated from the pavement by a garden that provides privacy from the street. They are also raised up above pavement level to provide greater privacy and security and allow natural surveillance of the garden.

All of the public parts of the building have been arranged along the South Parade frontage of the building at ground floor level to provide active frontages to this stretch of seafront. The new retail unit is located in the centre of the building with entrances to the Assisted Living and Retirement Living blocks on either side.

The diagram below shows the active frontage.



7. Siting and Alignment

As part of the strategy to 'repair the block' we have used existing building lines from the surrounding streets to set out the siting and footprint of the new building. The various alignments are shown on the diagram below and labelled 1 to 4.

1. The Clarendon Road block takes its building line from the former St Helens Park Crescent to the north of the site and is set back from Clarendon Road.
2. On Alhambra Road we have used the adjacent houses to determine the appropriate building line for the new building.
3. The seafront elevation has been design with a kink in the middle to help turn the corner and follow the faceted curve that defines this section of seafront.
4. The end of the South Parade block has a different geometry from the Clarendon Road block to break up the massing of the building.



Design Principles

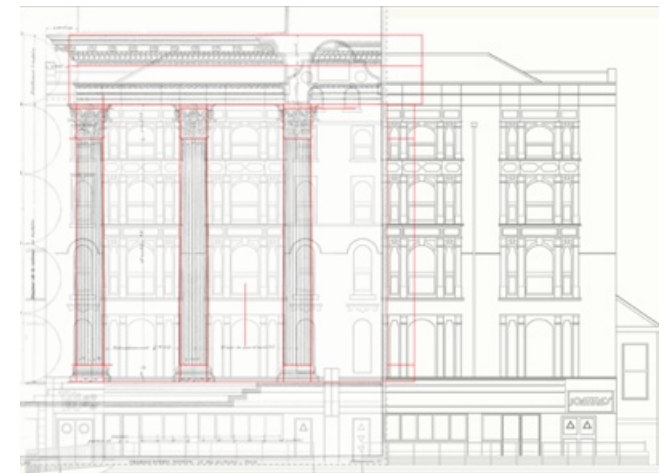
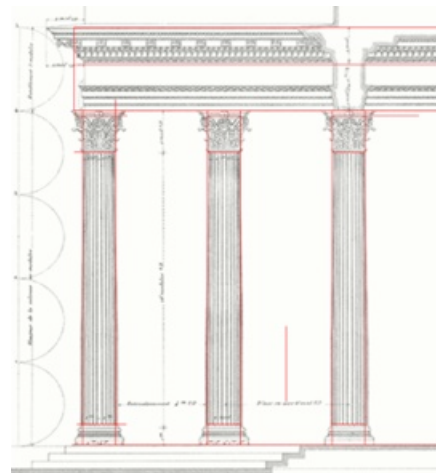
8. Proportion

Up until the 1930s almost all urban buildings followed the underlying principles of classical systems of proportion. These are based fundamentally on the classical 'orders' of architecture which are derived from the arrangement of ancient Greek and Roman temples.

In some buildings, like the former Savoy Building (top left), this relationship to the order of the classical temple is explicit. The elements of the classical order including the columns, capitals, entablature, cornice etc. are all visible on the facade of the building. The top of the shopfronts forms the plinth on which the columns sit. The windows are placed between the columns and the proportions and spacing of the windows are determined by the proportions of the classical order that they sit within.

On other buildings, such as the former Savoy Court, the proportions of the classical temple are implied rather than explicit. In this example there are no columns or entablature shown on the facade but the bay windows obey the proportions of the Corinthian order. The diagrams to the right show a Corinthian temple overlaid on the facade of Savoy Court. The shape and proportions of the bay windows correspond with the spaces between the Corinthian Columns.

Throughout the design of this project we have worked with Classical systems of proportion. This helps ensure the overall composition feels elegant and relates to its context without the application of a particular historic style. This is a different approach to the extant consented scheme which has been criticised by some for its rather wilful elevational treatment.



Proportion



The drawings on this page show how the proportioning system observed on traditional buildings in Southsea has been applied to the current design. The drawing above shows a classical Doric order laid over the proposed South Parade Elevation. It demonstrates how the proportions of the doric order have been used from the outset to set out the rhythm, dimensions and proportions of the facade. The elevation to the right shows the final design for the South Parade Elevation.

Design Principles

9. Materials

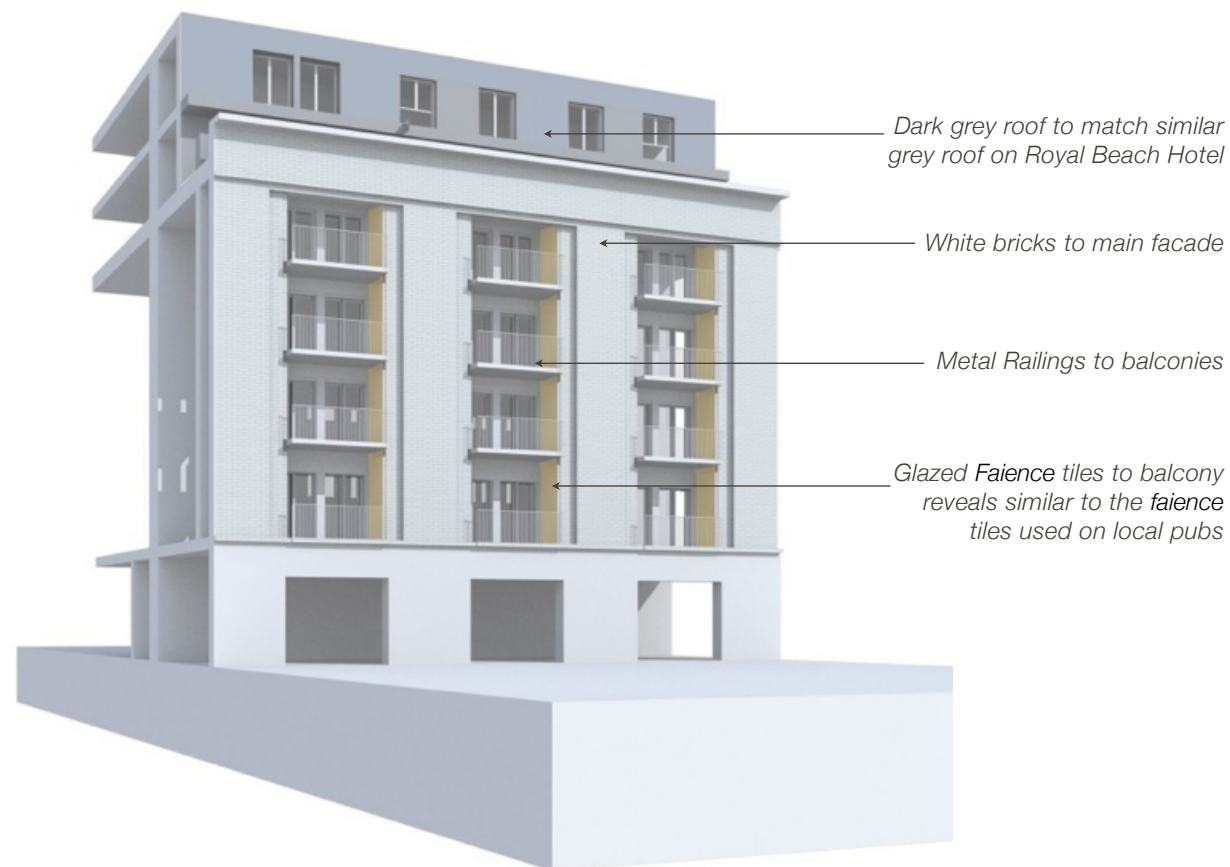
The streets surrounding the site have provided the inspiration and reference points for the materials used in the current proposals.

The seafront is made up mainly of light coloured painted rendered buildings that catch and reflect the bright light of the seafront. It was important to find a material that fits in with this light and reflective frontage without the impractical maintenance requirements of a painted facade. The white brick houses close to the site on Alhambra Road presented an interesting solution to this dilemma that combine lightness with robustness and good weathering properties.

To compliment the white brick facade and add colour and interest to the building we have proposed glazed tile reveals to the balconies. The faience tiles of local pubs provide a local reference point for these areas of colour.

The design also incorporates projecting metal balconies that tie in with other balconies along the seafront.

Below from left to right: Light coloured facades with metal balconies adjacent to the site; White bricks on Alhambra Road; Faience tiling on a local pub; Dark roof of the adjacent hotel.



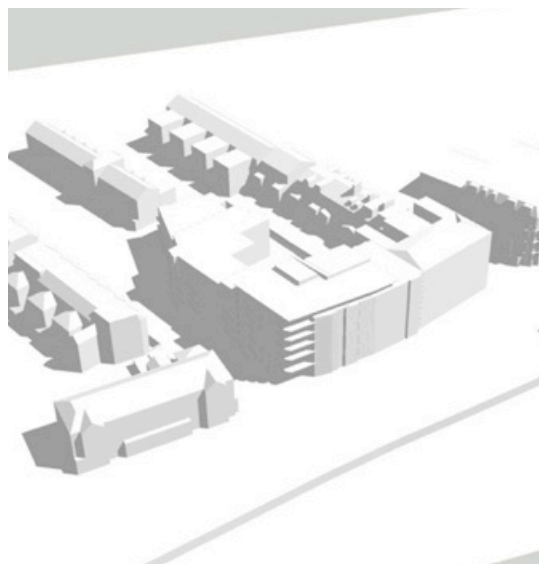
Comparison With Extant Scheme : Massing

From the beginning of the design process we have worked with computer and physical models to test the impact of the evolving design on the surrounding streets. The scale, massing, height, alignment and potential overshadowing have been examined repeatedly at each stage of the design process.

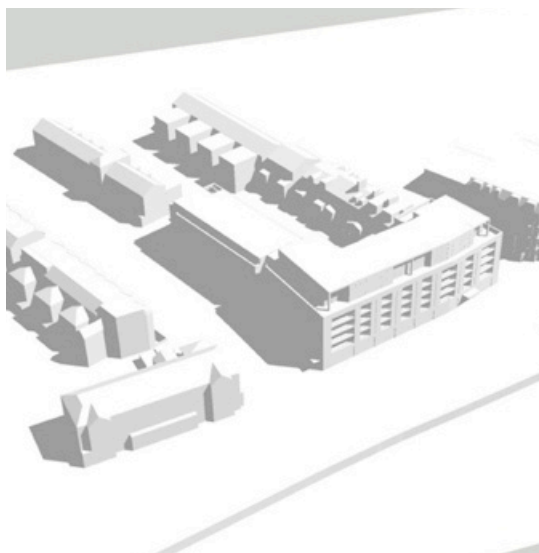
The models on this page provide a comparison between the massing of the proposed scheme and that of the extant planning permission for the Savoy Buildings site including Savoy Court.

The two views at the top of the page show the extant planning permission. On the top right is a view looking down Clarendon Road towards the sea at about 2.00pm. On the bottom right is the same view of the current proposals. These views demonstrate some of the improvements we have made on the previous application:

- There is clearly more of the seafront visible on the bottom view because of the set back of the building from Clarendon Road providing better views from the public realm and from the properties along Clarendon Road.
- The geometry of the extant scheme leaves a large North-West facing angled wall looking down Clarendon Road which would generally be cast in shadow. In the current proposals this is replaced with an elevation set back on the line of the adjacent properties which has been modeled to catch the afternoon light.
- The aerial views also demonstrate that the extant scheme has a more overbearing impact on properties across Clarendon Road and casts more shadow onto the road.



Extant Planning Permission



Current Proposals



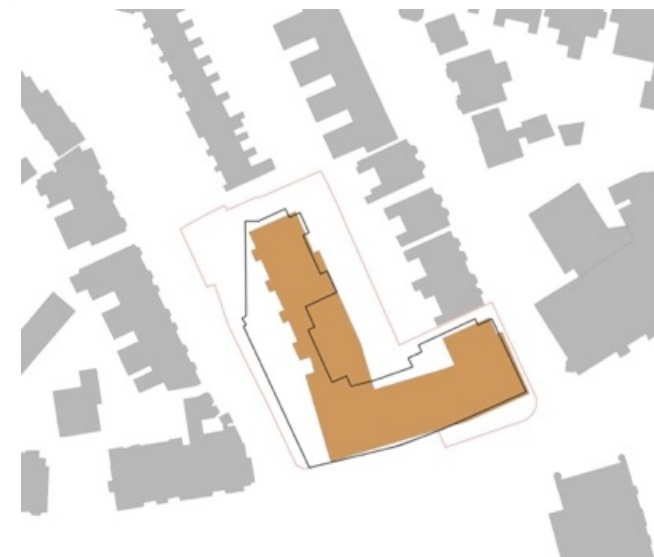
Design Strategy

Comparison With Extant Scheme: Height and Footprint



This page provides a comparison of the heights of the extant planning permission (left) with that of the current scheme (centre) and with the Royal Beach Hotel to the East of the site (right). The comparison shows that whilst the current proposal has seven floors, it has a similar overall height to the other two which both have six storeys with much larger floor to ceiling heights.

The plan to the right shows how the footprint of the current proposals (in brown) compares with the footprint of the extant planning permission (black line).



Design Strategy

Design Evolution



Above : Part elevation at time of Public Exhibition

The proposals have undergone a number of changes throughout the design process in response to feedback from a variety of different consultees.

Early consultation with the planning officers led to a reduction in height of the building by 2 storeys where it adjoins properties on Alhambra Road. At this time a parking area facing Clarendon Road was also removed and replaced with gardens.

Responses to the first round of public consultation resulted in changes to the elevations and the introduction of colour to the balcony areas. The design was worked up in more detail for a second round of public consultations in May which corresponded with a presentation to the Design review Panel



Above : South Parade Elevation at time of Public Exhibition

The images above and to the left show the scheme as it was presented at the public exhibition on 8th May. Feedback from the various stakeholders led to a number of changes to the design:

We have made significant changes to the design of the facade in response to some of the adverse feedback received. The changes provide more vertical emphasis to the facade and give more emphasis to the classical proportions on which the design strategy is based. We have also given more three dimensional modeling in response to some concern that the facade was rather flat. The asymmetric treatment of the balconies and kitchen bays on the South Parade Elevation have been removed and replaced with a more simple arrangement. This has allowed a much clearer and



Above : Extract of final South Parade Elevation

more straightforward articulation of the main elements of the facade.

The balconies have also been projected beyond the line of the facade to add articulation to the elevation and a projecting coping and pilasters has been added. Extensive changes have also been made to the elevations at either end of the front block facing Alhambra Road and Clarendon Road.

The Roof: After the exhibition the top storey of the building was set back a further 1.3m from the facade of the building to reduce any overbearing impact. This has also had the effect of introducing a horizontal division in the roof that breaks up its apparent mass and helps the overall proportions of the building.