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East Sussex  
TN31 6PJ

5 August 2021

Mr Tim Hickling  
Head of Service - Strategy & Planning  
Rother Planning Department  
Rother District Council  
Town Hall  
Bexhill-on-Sea  
East Sussex TN39 3JX

Dear Mr Hickling

**The George Hotel RR/2020/573/P & 574/L**

I am writing directly to you as I understand that the case officer for this application, Ms Tanya Szendeffy, has now left your planning department, a departure that seems to coincide with the recent addition of a massive tranche of detailed information on the refurbishment works relating to the above application.

This information, which became available on the website between 19 and 22 July 2021, appears to be a retrospective application for works that in the main appear already to have been carried out. Should we gather from this that some form of tacit, informal approval has been granted or is the applicant progressing entirely at their own risk? Given the extent of the additional information, we believe that the application should have been re-advertised, particularly where it relates to such obvious and significant changes as the treatment of the façade. This is what most Rye residents will notice and we seem to have been kept out of the loop and apparently denied any say in the matter.

One area of major concern to the Society relates to the redecoration of the principal façades to the High Street and Lion Street. This appears to have been completed and it is understood that the dismantling of the scaffolding is about to commence.

The colour scheme for the George which appears to have been adopted is shown on drawing R2 Red tones by James Stevens and dated 30.10.2020. It can best be described as the 'brick' option which seeks to identify each of the building phases in a different tone of warm brick or terracotta.

This is supported by a paint specification which contains the paint analysis report dated November 2020 prepared by Catherine Hassall. It should be noted that the paint specification Ref Paint Approach and Specification EF5 is dated April 2021 and appears to have been received by email at Rother on 9 April 2021. From the date of these coloured elevations, it would appear that the 'brick' approach was chosen before the paint analysis was available, only submitted to Rother some six months later and commenced two months after the details were submitted.

Our investigation of the paint analysis report and the historic photographic record is set out below and is the basis for our strong objection to the paint scheme which has apparently been adopted, and to the manner in which this significant change to the streetscape of Rye and the Conservation Area has been dealt with.

The Society is of the view that the paint scheme adopted over the last two hundred years is what we would term the 'united stone façade' where both parts of the High Street façade, the original refaced timber-framed building and the 1818 ballroom, were painted the same stone or cream colour, as a definite statement within the High Street. This approach is supported both by the paint analysis report and by the historic photographic record as shown below.

Whilst the Society fully understands the commercial and social necessity of bringing The George back into operation, it cannot and should not be in a form that we believe is historically incorrect and will significantly affect the listed building itself and the setting of the Conservation Area.

Yours sincerely

Julian Lockett  
Chairman, Planning Committee  
Rye Conservation Society

cc. Cllr Genette Stevens  
Cllr Rev Howard Norton

### **RCS analysis of original and currently executed redecoration scheme for external façades of George Hotel to High Street and Lion Street**

The George is currently being redecorated following a colour scheme that has only just been made available for public comment as of 21 July 2021 and which has not currently been granted planning or listed building consent. The colour scheme, the paint specification and the paint analysis were not submitted to Rother until 9 April 2021 although the coloured elevations R2 are dated 30.10.2020 and the paint analysis is dated November 2020. The implication is that they arrived at the colour scheme before receiving the analysis. It was reported that the painting had commenced by the second week of June 2021.

Much of the discussion regarding the design and specification of the refurbishment works appears to have been carried out by e-mail between the applicant and the Conservation Officer Tanya Szendeffy, who has now left RDC.

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It is not known whether any form of informal consent has been given for the scheme that is being implemented. Tanya's only comment to Julian Lockett on the telephone (June 2021) was that when she first saw it she thought it was 'rather dark.'

As a reminder of what was there and what is currently being implemented, see below:



As currently being painted

2019

George Paint I

Included within the specification for the works is a paint analysis report prepared by Catherine Hassel dated November 2020. Having read the paint analysis report, it is difficult to see where the current scheme is derived from.

The following painting schemes relating to specific historical periods are taken from the report.

#### **Original eighteenth-century finish**

The building was faced with mathematical tiles, which were fired with a dark red slip coat, but these tiles must have been painted soon after the building was completed, as no obvious layer of dirt can be seen between the terracotta and the first paint [Sample B4, p.10].

The first paint on the walls was a cream-coloured oil paint based on lead white tinted with yellow ochre and a small amount of carbon black. This was used on the main wall surfaces as well as on window sills and on the plinth.

This is an approximation to a warm stone colour which, together with the heavy cornice, would seem to have been chosen to give the refaced building the appearance of a 'classical stone' building so as to set it apart from the surrounding buildings.

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## 1818 DECORATION

When the Ballroom was built, the walls of the whole Hotel on this elevation were painted with the same stone-coloured limewash [Sample C6, p.13]. These layers were only found in a few samples from the older part of the building, and they must have later been washed off, but they can be seen in Sample B4 [p.10].

The windows, the cornice and door cases were painted with a pale stone-coloured oil paint.

The addition of the ballroom was the most significant change to the overall building and it is obvious from the paint analysis that it was intended that the whole building, i.e. the original refaced block and the new ballroom, should read as one. As can be seen from the mid-century analysis below, the whole High Street façade was painted in a stone colour.

## MID NINETEENTH CENTURY

The bluish grey used for the walls was not repeated, and the next time that the Hotel was painted, there was a return to warm, stone-coloured oil paints.

This coincided with the first time that 'GEORGE HOTEL' was painted across the façade using a red for the letters and green for the shading [Sample B10, p.11].

This whole façade treatment can be seen from the historic photographic record as can the use of a pale light paint colour i.e. the stone colour referred to in the paint analysis. The light tone of the paint is obvious when seen against the mathematical tiles to Lion Street.

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c1860s before cobbles removed in High street



c1890

IMAGE 3: The George Hotel, c.1890.



1942

IMAGE 4: The George Hotel, 1942. Historic England.

## George Paint 2: Historic Photographs

The only reference in the paint analysis report which reflects a colour scheme closer to the current painting underway is that relating to the later 19<sup>th</sup>C, where the stone colour was at one stage darker. **But it was still stone-coloured, not brick or terracotta-coloured.**

### LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY

The scheme was repeated the next three times that the building was painted: a stone colour for the walls and joinery, red and green for the letters, and red/brown for the plinths and rainwater goods. The shade of stone colour was initially quite dark in tone, with one of the schemes being almost a light brown but the last ones were a pinkish colour. By now the paints used for the walls were also being used for the woodwork of the windows, door cases and cornices.

### FIRST HALF OF TWENTIETH CENTURY [1930s?]

There was a change: on two occasions there was a departure from the normal decoration, and brown was used extensively over the whole Hotel. Perhaps this coincided with the change of ownership to Trust House Forte. Brown was used for the sash windows, dormer windows [B1, p.9], window sills, door cases, cornices and rainwater goods. It was also used for the walls up to shoulder level [Sample C26, p.15]. Above that the walls were painted an off-white

By the mid-1930s the lighter stone colour had been reinstated, see 1942 photo above.

### Conclusion:

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**From the above, RCS cannot understand why the paint scheme that has been chosen departs from the colours shown in the paint analysis report and the historic photographic record, and why such a significant change to the listed building and the setting of the Conservation Area has not been made available for public comment until now, when the painting is seemingly completed.**