

Grove Court Hotel
Cleator, Cumbria CA23 3DT

Heritage Statement & Impact
Assessment

August 2020





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August 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Townscape have been commissioned by the owners of the Grove Court Hotel to produce this Heritage Statement of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment to support a planning application for replacement with 10 dwellings. Townscape are Chartered Town Planning and Heritage Consultants who serve public, private and community sector clients. We specialise in all aspects of our historic environment, heritage, town planning and wider urban design.



Fig 1 The Grove Court Hotel, front elevation

2. Historic Description and Context.

- 2.1 The Grove Court Hotel is located on Trumpet Terrace at Cleator and was originally constructed as a Roman Catholic Infant school in the early 20th century. The date 1909 is determined from embossed rainwater hoppers attached to the building.
- 2.2 The school was formed under the guardianship of adjacent St Mary's Roman Catholic Church and the school replaced a much smaller schoolhouse latterly used as the Presbytery. It provided no more than Sunday school services.
- 2.3 The development of the former school and its establishment is in part due to the growth of the Cleator area in the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th century when the area including, Cleator, Cleator Moor and Frizington was locally known as "Little Ireland" due to the migration of Irish families to the area following the potato famine.
- 2.4 In addition to the growth of the local area of Cleator and the rising numbers of children, there were also changes in the British education system whereby the state began to replace Churches as the principal source of schooling. From 1880, education became compulsory until the age of

10, or a certain level of attainment was reached. These changes began with the 1870 Education Act which attempted to fill the gaps in the voluntary system using public money. The first act encouraged churches to build schools with specific school building grants in the hope that coverage of education would become more widespread. However, in order to ensure national coverage, the act allowed for Local boards to be created in effect to build, govern and help run new local Board Schools. The boards which began to govern the new schools were often elected ratepayers

- 2.5 The Education Act also inspired the Anglican, Roman catholic and Methodist churches to redouble their efforts to provide schools rather than see education pass to a board, where religious teaching had to be non-denominational¹. With building grants paid to Churches, there came certain rules and building conditions. Common features became the norm, such as construction in brick or stone, large windows, rows of gables and separate girls' and boys' entrances, yet there were no set designs.
- 2.6 Cleator boomed as a mining town in the nineteenth century due to the presence of Iron Ore and the textile industry, bringing many Irish workers from Antrim and Down. A Benedictine mission was established in 1853, from which Egremont (1878) and Frizington (1875) are offshoots. St Mary's Church itself is a listed building at grade II* and was constructed in 1870 with partial remains of an earlier church.
- 2.7 St Marys Church Rock-faced exterior with slate roof. Typical EW Pugin arrangement with nave and chancel under one long roof, north and south aisles ending in short transepts, western porch formed between two large buttresses and a tall western bell-cote. Attached to the south transept is a curious modern timber baptistery with a high curved roof. Architectural emphasis is concentrated at the west end facing the road. The western gable is framed by elaborate buttresses, there are three tall lancets above the western porch and the bell-cote has elaborate ornament.

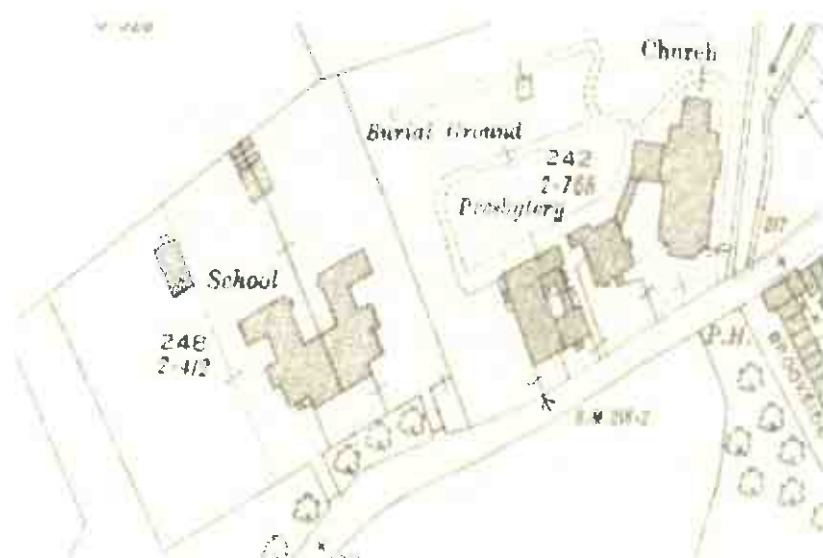


Fig 2 OS Map extract 25in 1923

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/englands-schools/englands-schools/>

- 2.8 The Grove Court Hotel today still has reminders to its previous use as a school which closed in the mid 1950s to be replaced/merged with another school. Map regression at fig 2 clearly shows the former school as having two distinct wings, a boys' and a girls' with separate entrances and class-rooms, although it's likely that communal areas, such as dining area; central hall and playground space was probably shared.
- 2.9 The building itself is predominately single storey (double height spaces) with partial basement. The building is constructed in fine square cut rough faced red sandstone with smooth flat faced stone to window/doors heads and sills, string courses and eaves detailing. Externally, the building provides a well designed and constructed building with modest architectural detailing consistent with its age with double height flat pedimented gables. In addition, water goods in places are original cast iron with some replacement Upvc, with blue slate above. Evident stub to truncated finials to roof. Chimney stacks with pots evident.
- 2.10 For the most part all windows have been replaced with Upvc although some original timber sliding sash exist, primarily to corridor areas. The whole of the building has been altered internally since its use as a hotel in the late 1950s early 1960s. There are no fixtures or fittings of any note.

Alterations include:

- Large central rear extension
 - Large side extension featuring 2 storey building with corridor link
 - Extensive subdivision of internal space to create bedroom spaces, open plan function room and bar area
 - Replacement to all windows and doors.
 - Removal of any original fixtures and fittings of any note or interest
 - Extensive re-flooring
 - Fire safety measure to all doors, windows, and extensive timber stud partition to create bedroom spaces, bathrooms and toilets
 - Conservatory
- 2.11 Externally to the building, the hotel occupies a generous site, with 3 later detached bungalows to the rear, with tarmac surfacing to the side and rear and large lawn area to the front and side of the hotel.



Fig 3 Rear north elevation



Fig 4 above rear elevation former hotel kitchen, Fig 5 below east elevation side





Fig 6 above east elevation and later extension



Fig 7 above side entrance to east elevation, Fig 8 below, west elevation





Fig 9 above west elevation



Fig 10 above and 11 below internal views, main central hall





Fig 12 above and 13 below internal views of bar area and general guest space



Fig 14 below, main kitchen area which has been destroyed due to a fire





Fig 15 Kitchen area main windows and roof which will need replacement.

3. Statement of Significance and Heritage Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 Understanding significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets and is embedded within current government policy in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework, 2012). A key objective in the NPPF is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.'
- 3.2 The NPPF advises that the more significant the heritage asset, the greater weight should be given its conservation. English Heritage issued Conservation Principles in 2008 to explain the importance of understanding what is significant before making changes to a historic building. English Heritage set out four main aspects of significance: evidential (or archaeological), historical, aesthetic and communal. Measuring significance is not an exact science; it relies on a combination of comparative analysis, an understanding of the building's development and architectural history and the setting. Assessments depend on using judgment in relation to the quality of the original design and fabric and the level of alteration. There are four main categories of significance that can be measured:

Exceptional – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* Listed buildings and World Heritage Sites. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.

High – a designated asset important at a national level, including Grade II listed buildings and locally designated conservation areas. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.

Medium – an undesignated asset important at local to regional level, including buildings on a Local List (non-statutory) or those that make a positive contribution to a conservation area (may also include less significant parts of listed buildings). Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.

Low – structure or feature of very limited heritage value and not defined as a heritage asset. Includes buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area and also later additions to listed buildings of much less value.

Negative – structure or feature that harms the value of heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

3.3 Significance of The Grove Court Hotel - The owner of the property has had it confirmed that the building is considered to be a building recognised as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) which ordinarily should be contained with a local list held by Copeland Council, which provides an assessment of the building in accordance with good practice. To determine the suitability of a building/structure to be a non-designated heritage asset, a list of criteria has been produced by Historic England, Advice note 7 Local Heritage Listing². The criteria include 10 categories which identify the special qualities of heritage assets. It is necessary for a building/structure to meet some of the criteria to be considered a non-designated heritage asset. I have provided commentary to the suitability of Grove Court Hotel in meeting the objectives of the criteria.

3.4 The criteria and my response are listed in the tables below. I have also used for reference guidance from Historic England as primary sources of information to the significance of the building and the details are contained within the footnotes with links to the relevant documents.³

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/heag018-local-heritage-listing/>

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-education-buildings/heag111-education-lsg/>

Criterion		Description
1.	Age	The age of an asset may be an important criterion and the age range can be adjusted to take into account distinctive local characteristics.
2.	Rarity	Judged against local characteristics
3.	Aesthetic Value	Intrinsic design value relating to local styles, materials or distinctiveness and local characteristics
4.	Group Value	Groupings of assets with a clear visual, design or historic relationship
5.	Evidential value	The significance of a local heritage asset of any kind may be enhanced by a significant contemporary or historic written record
6.	Historic Association	The significance of a local heritage asset of any kind may be enhanced by a significant historical association of local or national note, including links to important local figures
7.	Archaeological Interest	Archaeological interest if the evidence base is sufficiently compelling and if a distinct area can be identified
8.	Designed Landscape	Relating to the interest attached to locally important designed landscape, parks and gardens
9.	Landmark Status	An asset with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially striking aesthetic value. May be singled out as a landmark within the local scene.
10.	Social & Communal Value	Relating to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence often residing in tangible aspects of heritage contributing to the collective memory of a place.

Criterion		Description
1.	Age	The building dates from the early part of the 20 th century and its age provides limited significance and historical merit.
2.	Rarity	The building type is not rare neither nationally nor locally schools of a similar age are widespread, some are still used for their original education purpose whilst others have been converted to new uses.

3.	Aesthetic Value	The aesthetic value is principally as an example of its type. There is no distinguishing or distinct architectural language within the building and its decorative form is limited to early 20 th century design. Its aesthetic value is limited. However, the building does provide architectural interest by way of material use only.
4.	Group Value	There is no group value to the building itself. There is a historical relationship to the adjacent St Mary's Church. However, the buildings are distinctively different with no clear visual shared design or homogeneity.
5.	Evidential value	There are no known or publicly available records or evidence to suggest it has any evidential value. Although available historical sources are unavailable due to Covid-19 closures; what evidential information available is scant.
6.	Historic Association	There are no publicly accessible records or evidence to suggest that the property has any direct historical associations with any local or national figures of note or key events.
7.	Archaeological Interest	There is no known, published records or evidence to support any archaeological interest
8.	Designed Landscape	Not applicable. The building is not located within any formal or otherwise recognised landscape or formal designed garden.
9.	Landmark Status	The building by virtue of its setting, location, appearance and scale has no status as a landmark building. The building is not locally recognised as an architecturally accomplished building.
10.	Social & Communal Value	The property doesn't have any appearance relating to local identity. The building is architecturally, historically and aesthetically limited and examples are widespread, nor is the building designed in any local style unique to Cleator, therefore any local identity or social and communal value is negligible. The building is constructed using quality sandstone and where possible materials should be reused. There is no evidence to suggest that the building contributes to the collective memory of a place due to its closure as a school over 50 years ago.

3.5 Summary of significance;

- All principal elevations and stonework – medium/low significance
- later additions - low significance
- Roof and chimney – low/medium significance
- Internal plan form with no fixtures or fittings of note – low significance

The former school was converted to hotel use some 40/50 years ago and its significance is its historical use as a former school. Whilst the building externally has some good stonework and there are some remaining well executed remnants of the school entrances, the building in particular internally has been severely altered, with widescale internal reordering of space, new large external extensions and loss of many fixtures and fittings. The building doesn't meet the

minimum criteria to be recognised a non-designated heritage asset. Therefore, the significance of the building as a whole is low to neutral.

- 3.6 Whilst I acknowledge that the building is constructed with fine stonework, this in itself is not enough to recognise the building as a NDHA. The Grove Court Hotel has been closed for a number of years which regrettably was the result of a fire which has damaged the building particularly within the kitchen area and roof and this would require a degree of rebuilding. In tandem with the falling hotel trade and other works required, to bring the hotel back into viable use appears unlikely.

4. Description of Proposed Development, assessment of proposed works and their impact on the heritage assets.

- 4.1 This impact assessment relies on the understanding of the structure identified as the Grove Court Hotel. A brief understanding of the building and its significance has been discussed in the heritage statement.
- 4.2 This impact assessment is a judgment on the proposal for replacement of the building with a new proposed development of 10 new residential dwellings ranging in size providing 5 x 4 beds and 5 x 3 beds. All would have garages and private amenity space set within a new roadway forming a hammerhead to the existing bungalows which are not within the proposed development site.
- 4.3 In assessing the impact of a proposal which entails the impact on a non-designated heritage asset, this assessment draws on a number of key guiding documents where applicable; such as English Heritage Conservation Principles, 2008 and Historic England Guidance, Historic Environment - good practice advice in planning - Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets, March 2015, where required. However, the scope of the works doesn't fall into the category of impact upon the setting of a heritage building or area.
- 4.4 I have also considered the impact of the proposal upon the heritage asset by relating directly to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Copeland Council Planning Policies.
- 4.5 This report provides an appropriate level of significance assessment for this case, when 'considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposal 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. More weight is therefore given to assets of national importance such as listed buildings, than to local heritage; and more weight should be given to features and elements of high significance than those of lower importance. I have judged the building not to meet the minimum criteria to be considered as a non-designated heritage asset and therefore its significance is low.
- 4.6 Proposals may enhance, have a neutral impact or cause harm to a heritage asset. The level of

harm may be slight, less than substantial or substantial. The NPPF states that substantial harm to listed buildings (such as demolition or loss) should be exceptional and it has to be very robustly justified. Where 'less than substantial' harm is likely to be caused, the harm has to be balanced against the public benefits. This level of harm can include removal or covering over of features. With respect to the level of harm in relation to this proposed development, I consider the building doesn't qualify to meet the criteria to be considered a NDHA therefore there is no level of harm and overall the works proposed are positive.

4.7 Nationally and in accordance with the principles of the NPPF, any harm as a result of a planning application upon a heritage asset, might be classified as either 'substantial' or 'less than substantial' harm. Although no definition is provided as to what constitutes 'substantial' in such circumstances, the Planning Practice Guidance: 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' states that "in general terms substantial harm is a high test so it may not arise in many cases". I consider that the works as proposed will result in a positive impact to the property.

4.8 The NPPF states that "Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum use". The NPPF requires any harm to the significance of heritage assets to have a clear and convincing justification. However, in this case, my assessment has found that the Grove Court Hotel doesn't warrant consideration as a NDHA and therefore there is no requirement to meet the objectives contained within paras 184-200 of the NPPF.

5. Local Planning Policy

5.1 Copeland BC Local Plan outlines policies in relation to the Historic Environment and sets out the key policy considerations in relation to the determination of change to non-designated heritage assets. The proposal as submitted and to which this report relates has outlined that the proposals are seeking replacement of the existing building with a new residential development which reflects existing residential development in the area. Resulting in a positive impact upon the character of the area.

5.2 This heritage appraisal is written to fully understand the NDHA that is in question and to provide an independent and qualified opinion on the proposed works to the buildings.

6. Conclusions

6.1 This report has considered the heritage implications of the proposed works to the Grove Court Hotel. The works are informed, with an understanding and regard to the building being considered an NDHA, its history, form, architectural context and significance. The significance of the building has been assessed and the resulting impact commented upon.

6.2 Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of the

significance of any heritage asset and its setting, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.

- 6.3 The heritage assessment provided in this report is carried out in accordance with the historic environment policies in the NPPF and local planning policy and is intended to aid the assessment of the submitted planning applications. I have briefly outlined the historical development of the building, its character, setting and significance. I have outlined the scope of the proposed works and commented on the likely impact upon the heritage asset and any mitigating factors.
- 6.4 My conclusions have found that the proposed works to the building will overall result in a positive impact. There are strong public interests to support this application. I believe that the building doesn't qualify to be considered a building of local interest or a non-designated heritage asset. I find that the proposals as set out will not present any detrimental impact or harm upon the local area.
- 6.5 I would however, advise that a detailed photographic recording be undertaken at a level 2 in accordance with Historic England guidance and an archive produced and deposited with Cumbria Archives. In addition, where possible materials be reclaimed and reused within the new proposed development.

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August 2020

