

Planning Statement (including Design & Access Statement) –
Grindal House, Main Street, St Bees

Proposal: Change of use to children's nursery



Ms K Robertson

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SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy



1.0 Introduction

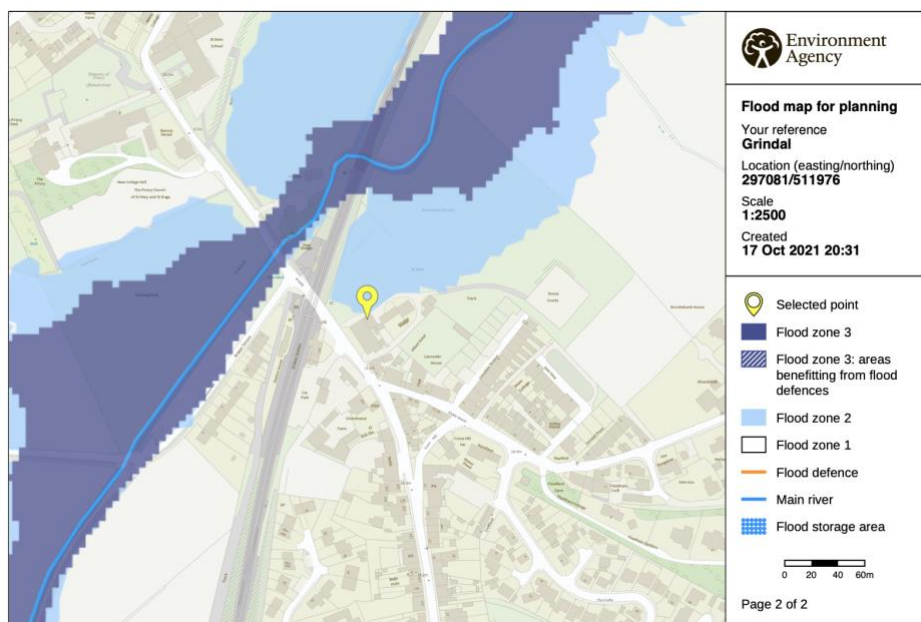
- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant in support of a planning application for a change of use at Grindal House, Main Street, St Bees.
- 1.2 The application is submitted in full as necessary for change of use applications. The purpose of this statement is to set out the planning case in support of the development of the site, and it should be read in conjunction with the plans submitted.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this Statement will set out the site's context, Section 3 covers the proposed development, Section 4 relates to the planning history of the site and surroundings, Section 5 will set out the planning policy context against which the application must be considered and undertakes a planning assessment of the proposed development and Section 6 will draw together the conclusions.

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The application relates to a large, detached building, located to centrally within the village of St Bees. The village is mainly based around a single road running from north to south. To the northeast, the village is joined by the B5345 road between St Bees and Whitehaven. To southeast the village is connected to Egremont by the same road. The village is bounded by the beach to the west side.
- 2.2 The property adjoins the main road through St Bees village to the west, to the east other St Bees School curtilage land, to the south the residential curtilage of the dwelling 1 Main Street, and to the north it adjoins the railway line running through the village. The application site is close to the St Bees railway station.
- 2.3 The application site is situated within an established area within the village. It is located within walking distance of the St Bees Primary School, Village Hall, shops, pubs and basic amenities in the village.
- 2.4 In summary therefore, the site is situated within a long-established village location that is within reach of facilities that the Borough can offer.
- 2.5 The building is located within the St Bees Conservation Area and is a Listed Building. The sandstone wall to the frontage is also Listed. There are no Tree Preservation Order's on or directly adjacent to the site. All of the above is detailed on the extract from the Copeland GIS Map:



- 2.6 The building is located in an area that the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning has noted as Flood Zone 1, and as such have a low probability of flooding as detailed on the map below.



3.0 The Proposed Development

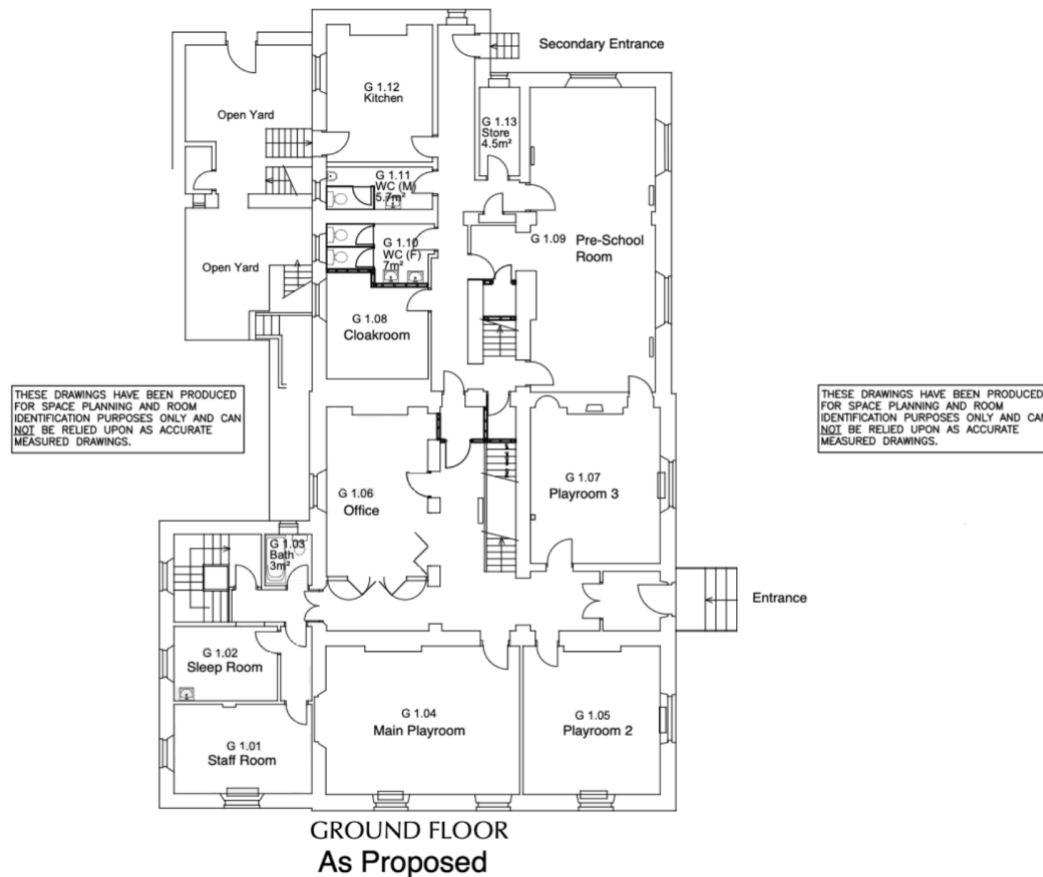
- 3.1 The application is a full planning application for the change of use of the ground floor of Grindal House from secondary school accommodation comprising dormitory

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accommodation and classrooms, to a children's nursery. The property was formerly used for the above, but the use was ceased with the closure of St Bees School in 2015. While the main part of the school has since reopened, this property (and other separate buildings detached from the main campus) has been vacant since.

- 3.2 The proposed alterations to the property in terms of works to the actual building would comprise very minimal changes, with the main changes externally associated with the walls and grounds. Two openings in the garden type wall are proposed to be included in the front garden, to allow for circulation around the property, without leaving the site onto the public footpath.
- 3.3 The existing access to the south of the building will be improved by removing a 6.0m section of wall to the north of the access to improve the visibility. In addition, a small section of wall to the south of the access will also be removed and the gatepost relocated to greatly improved visibility to the south. Currently the access is the only access for the property, and it has no visibility in either direction as the adjacent walls are over 1.0m high and directly adjacent to the highway.
- 3.4 The internal alterations proposed consist of a new door opening between the rooms noted as G 1.07 and G 1.09 on the ground floor and blocking up the door in room G 1.11.
- 3.5 The property will have 12 in curtilage parking spaces to the rear of the building, which will be utilised for staff parking only. The parent drop off area will be in the village car park opposite the site.
- 3.6 The application site is considered well related to the existing properties in the village but will not adversely impact the surrounding occupants.
- 3.7 The proposed day to day running of the nursery would be the same as the current situation at Abbots Court. The nursery have on average 40 children on site at any one time. It is a very flexible nursery with no set sessions, which allows the parents to come and go throughout the whole day. This makes it easier for drop offs and collections as there is never a particular busy time where a number of parents are trying to get to the property at a certain point.
- 3.8 The existing nursery currently has 15 staff members, some are full and some part time, so generally there is around 10 staff at one time. Again, they are also flexible hours so come at different times. This will remain the same in the new building.
- 3.9 They currently try to run as many outdoor sessions as possible, so a property with suitable external space was essential, as with the existing location at Abbots Court.
- 3.10 The current opening times are 7.30am-5.30pm Monday – Friday, and the business is open 50 weeks of the year. Again, this will be the same in the new building.
- 3.11 Below is the ground floor plan, marked with the proposed use of the rooms. This will provide a similar layout and level of space to Abbot Court. The toilets facilities will remain as existing.



4.0 Planning history

4.1 The following are previous planning applications on the building:

- 96/0767 - change of use to office accommodation for, temporary period of up to 12 months – Approved
- 97/0207 - Listed Building consent for internal alterations, to provide study bedrooms and classrooms on ground floor - Approved
- 4/98/0383 - new enclosed fire escape – Approved
- 4/98/0391 - Listed Building consent for works associated with new enclosed fire escape – Approved
- 4/01/0037 - satellite television dish – Approved
- 4/01/0038 - Listed Building consent for satellite tv dish – Approved
- 4/12/2171/OL1 - Listed Building consent for re-roofing & replacement windows - Approved

5.0 Planning Policy and its application to the proposed development

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- 5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Local Development Plan consists of policies within the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (December 2013). The policies in the following paragraphs are considered relevant to the proposed development.
- 5.3 The Local Plan sets out a long-term spatial vision and strategic objectives to support Copeland's vision which is "Working to improve lives, communities and the prosperity of Copeland". Although it was adopted before the updated NPPF (2019) it was adopted after the first NPPF that was published in March 2012 and therefore closely follows the principles of sustainable development, as defined by national policy and delivering sustainable housing in accordance with that policy.

Strategic Policies

- 5.4 **Policy ST1** of the core strategy sets out the fundamental principles that will achieve sustainable development.
- 5.5 **Policy ST2** sets a spatial development strategy whereby development should be guided to the principal settlement and other centres and sustain rural services and facilities.
- 5.6 **Policy SS4** is the Local Plan policy regarding Community and Cultural Facilities and Services. Paragraph 5.5.1 prior to the Policy states '*In order for communities to be successful it is vital that they are well served by a full range of public, private, community and voluntary services. Facilities must be appropriate to people's needs, affordable, accessible to all, and available locally. This reduces the need for people to travel to obtain essential services, particularly benefiting the less mobile and more deprived members of society.*'
- 5.7 The Policy states:

Policy SS4 – Community and Cultural Facilities and Services

The range of services and facilities serving the Borough's communities will be protected by:

A Encouraging the provision and retention of good quality services and facilities which meet the needs of local communities and are accessible by public transport, cycling or on foot. Services and facilities which benefit the less mobile or more deprived members of the community, and which maximise opportunities for people to improve their health and well-being, will be given particular support.

B Ensuring that needs are met in the most appropriate, effective and accessible way, by:

i) locating widely used services and facilities in Whitehaven and the three smaller towns

ii) increasing provision of local community facilities, such as community centres and public open space, in Local Centres and villages identified as needing them

iii) improving the number and quality of facilities in areas of the Borough which

exhibit higher than average levels of socio-economic deprivation – especially as regards health care, sports and fitness facilities where healthy living is an issue

iv) providing specifically for the leisure and recreational needs of older people

C Guarding against the loss of land or buildings belonging to existing facilities in all locations by:

i) wherever possible ensuring sites are retained for other forms of community use

ii) ensuring that satisfactory alternative provision is made where proposals for development will result in the justifiable loss of an existing service or facility, in accordance with Policy DM21

D Allowing the expansion and / or enhancement of existing community and cultural facilities to assist continuing viability, particularly in areas where new development will increase the demand for facilities

E Where development proposals are likely to increase demand for certain community facilities and services the Council will expect developers to contribute to their provision, enlargement, improvement or enhanced maintenance, in accordance with Policy ST4 and Local Development Documents relating to infrastructure provision'

- 5.8 The above Local Plan policy is supportive of uses such as the nursery proposed in this application. The nursery has been a successful, well supported business located in the village for several years, but in a rented building. This move will allow them to purchase the proposed site and have a permanent location if the application is approved. The business is significant within the village, as it has a sufficient community to support the business, and therefore reduces the need for travel and increase sustainability.
- 5.9 **Policy ENV1** sets out an approach to ensure that new build development is not prejudiced by flood risk, by permitting new build on sites outside areas at risk of flooding and ensuring that new development does not contribute to increased surface water run-off through measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- 5.10 The building is located within Flood Zone 1 which the Environment Agency (EA) define as an area having less than 0.1% annual risk of flooding and is therefore at the lowest risk of flooding. A small area of land within the application site partly to be used as the vehicular access is within Flood Zone 2. Some of the wider surrounding land is within a Flood Zone 2 & 3, but not the building. The use is therefore considered to be a low risk in terms of flooding.
- 5.11 **Policy ENV3** seek to ensure that new development will protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
- 5.12 The proposed development is currently the site of an existing building with curtilage land. Therefore, the development proposed does not raise any obvious concerns on this subject. There are no designations or information available which suggests that the site is subject to any biodiversity interest.

Development Management Policies

Drainage and Flood Risk

- 5.13 **Policy DM24** states where a proposed development is likely to be at risk from flooding or increases risk of flooding elsewhere, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be required to be submitted as part of the planning application. Development will not be permitted where it is found that there is an unacceptable risk of flooding; or the development would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- 5.14 The building is located within a Flood Zone 1 in which the NPPF recognises that all uses types are therefore appropriate, but a small area of the curtilage land is within a Flood Zone 2, and as such a Flood Risk Assessment is provided with the application. The existing foul and surface water connections for the building will be retained.

Access and Transport

- 5.15 **Policy DM12** requires development to provide a car parking provision in accordance with adopted residential parking standards. Cumbria Highways have provided a Cumbria Development Design Guide, which provides a suggested level of parking for all types of development.

- 5.16 A proposed development of this nature requires the following parking in accordance with the Cumbria Development Design Guide:

'1 space per 3 staff (at one time) PLUS 1 visitor space per 3 classrooms plus space to collect children.'

The site layout plan provides a provision over the basis requirement above, with 12 spaces noted, and a drop off point for parents. It is therefore considered that the proposed layout meets this criterion of Policy DM12.

- 5.17 **Policy DM22** requires development proposals to be accessible to all users by providing convenient access into and through the site for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, access for emergency and service vehicles, meeting adopted car parking standards which reflect the needs of the Borough in its rural context.
- 5.18 The proposed development provides a safe, functional, permeable and inclusive access either by foot or now by vehicle. The proposed access proposed an in-out access arrangement as detailed on the layout plan and this has been agreed as acceptable by Cumbria County Council as Highways Authority during pre-application advice discussions, subject to the access arrangement being conditioned as part of any approval from the Local Authority.

The proposal therefore meets the aims of local plan policies DM12 and DM22.

Heritage

- 5.19 **Policy DM27** is the local Plan policy regarding heritage in the Borough. This states:

'A Development proposals which protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character of the Borough's historic sites and their settings will be supported. This will be particularly relevant in the case of:

i) Scheduled Ancient Monuments

ii) Conservation Areas

iii) Listed Buildings and structures

iv) Non-listed buildings and structures or landscape features of local heritage and archaeological value

v) Surface and below ground archaeological deposits

B Development proposals which have a significant adverse effect on a Scheduled Ancient Monument or its wider site or setting will not be permitted

C Development within Conservation Areas will only be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area and, where appropriate, views in and out of the area. The Council will pay particular attention to:

i) How new development respects the character of existing architecture and any historical associations, landscape features, open spaces, trees, walls and quality of townscape

ii) The impact of any proposed works to trees with regard to policy DM28

iii) The design of any proposals for new or altered shopfronts and / or signage, which should be an integral part of the design and avoid the use of internally illuminated signage

D Development which affects Listed Buildings or their setting will only be permitted where it:

i) Respects the architectural and historic character of the building

ii) Avoids any substantial or total demolition, or any demolition that is not related to proposed development affecting the building

iii) Does not have a significant adverse effect on the setting or important views of the building

iv) Involves a change of use to all or part of the listed building which contributes to the conservation and overall economic viability of the building, and where the use can be implemented without any adverse alterations to the building

E Any development proposal which is considered to affect an existing or potential site of archaeological importance will be required to be accompanied by an archaeological assessment. Where archaeological deposits are evident, below ground or on the surface, evidence should be recorded and where possible requires development proposals to be accessible to all users by providing convenient access into and through the site for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, access for emergency and service vehicles, meeting adopted car parking standards which reflect the needs of the Borough in its rural context. Where necessary the potential transport implications of development will be required to be supported by a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan to manage any significant transport implications.'

- 5.20 Obviously with a site containing two separate listed items, criterion D is the most relevant to this application. In accordance with point i, the proposed development aims to respect the historic character of the building, by making as few visible alterations to the property as necessary. Those proposed to the frontage must be made to bring the building back into use.
- 5.21 The proposed development avoids any total or substantial demolition of the building and seeks to relocate the Listed wall to ensure its retention, in accordance with point ii. The relocation of the wall changes the setting of the building but will still be retained to the frontage of Grindal House to ensure the wider view of the building is not altered.
- 5.22 Point iv) is the main point relevant to this application. The change of use is proposed for the building, due to the previous use ceasing in 2015. St Bees School reopened in 2017, but Grindal House was not to be utilised again and was put up for sale. The School decided that any buildings not on the main site based around Wood Lane would not form part of the School going forward, due to safety and security issues. They have recently also sold the nearby Terrace of dwellings, Lonsdale Terrace.
- 5.23 This particular building was subsequently put up for sale, however in the years since this has been the first offer made for the property and is subject to planning permission to complete. Therefore, the proposed change of use is the only economic alternative use for the building, and as a nursery is actually very closely aligned to the previous secondary school use.

Principle – National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (as revised February 2019)

- 5.24 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF states that sustainable development has three objectives social, economic and environmental.
- 5.25 The social and economic are as follows:
- “a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being. “*
- 5.26 Paragraph 11 covers the issue of the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

*“For **decision-taking** this means:*

Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

5.27 Paragraph 189 states:

‘Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.’

5.28 Paragraph 190 states:

‘Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and

d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.’

5.29 The above is noted, and it is considered that the Copeland Local Plan includes Policy DM27 to guide development in accordance with the above wording.

5.30 Paragraph 194 states:

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.’

5.31 Paragraph 195 states:

‘Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.’

5.32 In accordance with the above paragraphs, the planning application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement that identifies the surrounding heritage assets and assesses the impact upon them.

5.33 Paragraph 197 states:

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.’

5.34 The above is a very important section in the consideration of this planning application. The application building has now been vacant for over 5 years, and without the approval of this application has no viable future use. The building has been for sale for a number of years without any interest and the current owner has no future use or plans for it. In addition, it is currently negatively impacting them insofar as some continued maintenance is required and this is an on-going financial burden. The proposed use is as close to the previous use as possible and is highly appropriate for a building central in the village community. It is vitally important for the heritage asset, the wider Conservation Area and the community that this application is approved, so that the new owner can commence with maintenance and secure a viable use for its future. The nursery business has been run in the village for several years, and is a commercially successful business, that now needs its own location. This is an ideal combination of building and user.

5.35 Paragraph 199 states:

‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.’

5.36 As stated above, this proposed development secures a viable future for the building with a new owner that will maintain and invest in the property to bring it to a high standard as a heritage asset.

5.37 Paragraph 200 states:

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'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.'*

5.38 In terms of the main property itself as a Listed Building, very little change will be noticeable, and only in terms of the wider setting with the access being widened and the stone walls removed for visibility.

5.39 Paragraph 201 states:

'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.'*

5.40 The above text of paragraph 201 is exactly what has led to the planning submission now submitted to the Local Authority for consideration. No other purchaser of the building has been found during the substantial marketing period, and the current owners are a charity organisation, who could find no use for it. On the final point, it is considered that any harm from the removal of the section of wall is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use. In terms of public benefit, many residents in the village are aware of the proposed development, and have indicated their support to the applicant.

5.41 Paragraph 205 states:

Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.'

5.42 The applicant would have no issue with the inclusion of a planning condition to allow for a record of the existing building and then following the proposed works.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed development provides the opportunity for the building to be brought back into a viable use.
- 6.2 The applicant is progressing this application and purchase to ensure that their successful business is able to remain in the village community in the future.
- 6.3 The proposed development has been sensitively designed to consider the site characteristics, surroundings, and wider location.
- 6.4 Improvements can be achieved to the existing access for the site which currently has no suitable visibility.
- 6.5 Any harm in terms of the heritage assets is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into a viable use.
- 6.5 It is contended therefore that the proposed development is acceptable and is in accordance with both national and local planning policy, and therefore should be approved.

Simon Blacker MRTPI