

PLANNING STATEMENT

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PROJECT :

Proposed change of use of Grindal House, St. Bees to an Apart Hotel including associated external works to improve access and parking provision



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1. SITE & BACKGROUND

This planning statement is in support of a planning application at Grindal House, Main Street, St Bees covering all matters relating to the change of use of the property from boarding house to Apart-Hotel (C3) including associated improvements to parking and access arrangements.

The application building is a large, detached grade II listed building, located on Main Street opposite the train station in the centre of St Bees. The property was formerly used as a boarding house for St. Bees School but the use ceased with the closure the School in 2015.

The property fronts the main road through St Bees. To the north-east is St Bees School curtilage land, to the south-east the residential curtilage of the dwelling 1 Main Street, and to the north-west grass land adjoins the railway line running through the village. Pow Beck passes through the grounds to the north.

The application site is situated within an established area within the village. It is located within walking distance of the basic amenities in the village and most importantly for this application, it sits adjacent to the railway station.

St Bees village was designated as a Conservation Area in 1976 by Copeland Borough Council. Grindal House and its frontage wall are referred to in The Conservation Area appraisal.

The building has been vacant since 2015 and has suffered from some deterioration due to vandalism, leaking roofs and vegetation growth. There are structural concerns on the front wall at the junction with the lower south eastern wing. It appears that roof issues have caused water ingress which has developed into a dry rot issue internally. There is a bulge in the south-eastern corner of the main building which may also be a result of water ingress into the core of the wall. Both these issues need urgent attention to avoid further structural deterioration and further development of dry rot.

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Above: dry rot in the corner of the second floor store



Above: dry rot in ceiling of ground floor Common room

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2. RECENT PLANNING HISTORY

There are a number of planning/listed building applications since 1996 which have included approval of various alterations internally, window replacement, fire escape and satellite dish applications.

More recently, applications were made in 2021 (4/21/2486/0F1 & 4/21/2487/0L1) for change of use to of the ground floor areas to form a day nursery including associated external works to improve to parking and access forming a one way road and parking system around the building. These were approved recently.

3. THE PROPOSAL

The application is a full planning application for the change of use of Grindal House from secondary school accommodation comprising dormitory accommodation, staff living quarters and classrooms, to form an 'Apart Hotel' with a total of 17 suites.

The change of use will involve internal alterations to the layout, repair of existing external fabric of the building and creation of a new one-way access/exit system and associated parking provision. There are no physical alterations externally.

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4. DESIGN & HERITAGE

The building is located within the St Bees Conservation Area and is a grade II Listed Building. The sandstone wall to the frontage is also Listed.



The Historic England text on Grindal House states *“House, mid C19 with later additions and alterations. Main block incised stucco with rusticated quoins to banded ground floor. String between ground and 1st floors, sill band to 2nd floor; eaves cornice with egg and dart moulding. Wing adjoining south end incised stucco with eaves cornice. Hipped, graduated slate roofs; corniced, rendered, chimneys and pedimented dormers to main block. Symmetrical 3-storey, 3-bay main block has central panelled door in rusticated architrave with tripartite sash to either side; 3 sashes to each floor above (2nd floor 16-pane), all with rusticated lintels. 3 sashes to each floor and cellar on north return. 2-storey 2-bay wing has tripartite sashes to ground floor. Single sashes above, one 16-pane. All windows in architraves..”*

The Historic England text on the frontage wall is *“Forecourt wall contemporary with house; stone, c4 ft high on plinth with moulded top rail. 4 panels pierced with slits and separated by square section piers to either side of central gate; octagonal gate piers have plinth and corniced ogee top.”*

There are also 3 listed buildings (or structures) within this area of St Bees, which are as follows: - The Grade II Listed St Bees Signal Box; - The Grade II Listed Stone House Farm; - The Grade II Listed 1-11 Lonsdale Terrace. These are all mentioned in the Conservation Assessment and will not be affected by the proposed development due to the separation distances and the limited changes proposed to the site. As such, there is no impact on the heritage or setting of these other assets.

There are no Tree Preservation Order’s on or directly adjacent to the site.

The proposal is a sympathetic new use for the whole building requiring no physical external alterations to the listed building and retention of the listed frontage wall. External alterations amount only to the creation of an improved access and one-way vehicular system with a new exit with improved visibility at the north western end of the building. This access works is exactly the same as that recently approved under applications (4/21/2486/0F1 & 4/21/2487/0L1) so justification of the layout and effect on the listed building are not included in this statement. The approved plan is submitted with this application with additional parking provision shown which will be formed from hardcore and gravel on the existing grassed areas.

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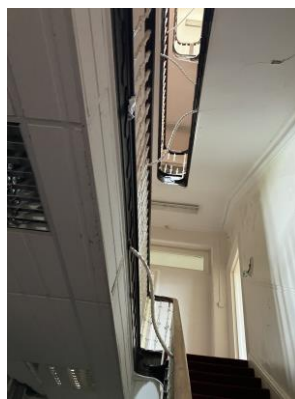
The existing rear extensions, timber clad flat roof structure, will be used for ancillary storage, kitchens and breakfast areas requiring only minor alterations to the internal configuration in conjunction with like for like repair of the external fabric and windows.

Alterations are required internally to the main building to form the apart-hotel suites. These alterations are mainly removal or alteration to studwork walls, many of them are not original and were added to form the boarding house room divisions and bathrooms. The main alteration is the cutting out of the floor to form the new lift. This has been located to avoid disturbance of any main walls and will be free standing in its own right so could at some point in the future, if required, be removed and the floors reinstated. The enclosed plans indicate walls removed in dashed lines and new walls are identified as either masonry or studwork as shown on the key. Where door openings are to be blocked up existing doors will be retained to one face with any decorative surrounds and blocked up beyond so that features to the main stair are retained.

Existing tile grid suspended ceilings will be removed and replaced with a fire resistant suspended plasterboard ceiling with any cornices, roses and mouldings left intact above the false ceiling which will be used as means to runs service wires and pipes in the void created.

To improve access and usability of the lower ground floor areas a new access stair is proposed adjacent to the lift shaft. The existing stairs to the basement are unsuitable for guest use due to the worn nature of the treads. These existing stairs will be retained but enclosed behind a studwork partition.

The central staircase will be retained as the main access to the apartment rooms.



Policy DM27 of the adopted Copeland Local Plan is the policy regarding Heritage Assets. This states: 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.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 197 states: 'In determining applications, local

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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.'

The proposal enables the building to be brought back into use without significant affect on the Listed Building appearance and integrity. It will bring improvements to the buildings fabric and justify the required continued financial investment in maintenance and upkeep and overall have a positive effect on the building which sits in a prominent setting on arrival in St. Bees enhancing the overall appearance of the conservation area.

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5. ACCESS

Access into and within the building

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.

Access within the building is an important consideration to ensure the proposed use is viable and able to be used by all. The inclusion of a lift is critical to be able to offer full use of the building. Although not ideal, the only level access into the building is via the lower ground floor but the lift will extend to this level and the parking will be well placed for disabled customers or staff to use this access.

The lift is essential given the scale of the building and the number of floors. It would be discriminating to say that disabled people do not have access to the whole building particularly given the extent of the investment and the material change of use. As the main entrance level is raised up approximately 900mm above the surrounding ground levels the only viable access for a level approach is the lower ground floor. This area has limited window area and has no scope to form bedrooms to the standard of the others and in any case the use of this area for bedrooms then displaces the other guest facility rooms to the upper level making them in turn inaccessible without a lift.

The applicant/operator is required to have a disabled access statement in place and available in the building for guests to see.

Building regulations part M requires a material change of use of a building to comply with disabled access regulations. We acknowledge that some tolerance is given to historic/listed buildings where preservation of the fabric is essential. However, in this case the historic buildings future depends on finding a long-term use and to justify the financial commitment the long-term use has to be viable and attractive to as wider user group as possible.

The only solution to enable the building to operate well, provide opportunity for all and to assist with the 'manual handling regulations' for housekeeping staff is to have a lift connection all floors (with exception of the attic level due to headroom restrictions on the shaft).

The positioning of the lift is in our opinion appropriate in preserving the more prominent features to the front and side elevation rooms of the the building and using what is really a 'back of house' area for the lift position having as little impact as practically possible on the overall integrity of the heritage asset.

The area chosen for the lift is the area with the clearest route without interference with existing structural walls and architectural features. In the lower ground floor area it is a toilet area, rendered walls, quarry tiled floors, plasterboard ceilings and extract ceiling ducts. There is nothing significant that will be affected here. The lift is positioned to sit inside the load bearing wall position so that the building integrity is retained. At upper ground floor level, main foyer, the walls have already been

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significantly altered to suit a slightly raise floor (presumably due to settlement in the past) and an open office arrangement with glass panels and doors facing the foyer. There is nothing historic about these doors and the raised floor which will be removed to allow the lift shaft and new stair to be formed. The main structure follows on up from below with the lift shaft built on the 'room side' of the walls retaining any features in the foyer and avoiding disturbance of the main walls. The same continues up on each level, the first floor has once been one big double windowed room but has been split off with new stud partitions to form bathrooms. These stud walls will be removed but the chimney breast and main walls retained. At second floor it is still one big room so no intermediate walls to be removed. In the attic rooms there are small alterations to stud walls.

Vehicular access

Access into the site for vehicles will be much improved in terms of highway safety. The proposed access arrangements with improved turn-in and a one-way system to the new exit road are all exactly as that recently approved under applications 4/21/2486/0F1 & 4/21/2487/0L1 as described below.

The existing access to the south of the building will be improved by removing a section of wall and the oil tank to the north of the access to improve the width of the access. The gatepost will be retained and relocated to the new end of the wall. Currently this 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 and there is no footway at this point. Given the lack of visibility, the lack of footway and the limitations on improving the visibility this access will be designated as entry only.

A new vehicular exit from the site is proposed to be made in the stone wall to the north of the building. This is near to the location of a previous opening in the wall made a few years ago for an access for work associated with railway improvements work. The dummy gatepost to the existing gate will be relocated to extend the width of this opening to suit the 4m road. The stone wall north of the new will be reduced in height allow improved visibility.

The creation of the new exit will allow operation of a one-way system which will be clearly signed on site. The existing access to the south of the building will form the 'ENTRANCE' to the site, with the new opening to the north as the 'EXIT'.

The proposed site exit position has been discussed with Network Rail on site who have agreed to the position. The wall is of random sandstone construction with a peaked sandstone coping stone. The work would comprise reducing the wall to 1.0m, including the reuse of the existing coping stones. The sequence and timing of these works are to be agreed with Network Rail due to the proximity to the level crossing. They will provide a watching brief throughout the works and assess all risk assessments and procedures before commencement.

The hotel use requires parking provision in accordance with the Cumbria Development Design Guide: The site layout plan provides a provision over the basic requirement, with 25 spaces provided allowing 1 space per room plus 8 for staff. It is therefore considered that the proposed layout meets this criterion of Policy DM12.

A revised plan has been issued following comments from the planning officer which relocates parking bays 23-25 to retain the developed area within the approved access road limits.

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6. SUSTAINABILITY

The proposals location was critical to promoting a sustainable apart-hotel aimed specifically at accommodating Sellafield workers enabling them to leave their vehicles on site for the duration of their working pattern and take the train directly into Sellafield. Although the parking spaces have been allocated to allow each room a designated space it is hoped that the rail network will enable some of the guests to arrive by train as well as accessing work to Sellafield by train improving the carbon footprint of the proposal.

Trickle feed car charging points will be added along the rear extension.

7. EMPLOYMENT & OPERATION

The applicants are Hoteliers and the building, although in apartment form, will operate in the same way as a traditional hotel. Given the market that the hotel is aimed at it is anticipated that apartments will be occupied for a number of days to suit shift patterns at Sellafield or other nearby employment sites.

Looking at other establishments which cater for Sellafield workers it is evident that 4 days seems to be the likely duration for a stay in one room and is likely to fall in the Monday to Friday period. Outside of these bookings from Sellafield the hotel will also take other guests, either business or leisure, on a no-minimum length stay basis to suit room availability. There will be no minimum or maximum stays and will operate via the hotels own booking system. Rooms will have a nightly rate and will include breakfast either in the breakfast area or served to the apartments. There will be a maximum continuous stay per room set by the hotel, the duration of this will be controlled by a suitable condition on the planning approval the wording of which is to be agreed with Copeland Borough Council.

There will be a drinks licence for residents to cover the recreation areas and the hotel rooms. The breakfast area/dining facility will not be open to non-residents.

The proposal will introduce a number of full and part time jobs. It is expected that the equivalent of 6 full time jobs will be created which will cover kitchen duties and housekeeping. Additional employment as and when required to contracted staff for general maintenance of the hotel and grounds upkeep.

There will be 2 on 'live in' members of staff who will occupy one of the apartments. They will oversee general running of the hotel, carry out reception duties, bookings, check in/check out etc. and manage the house keeping staff, orders, goods. Reception times will vary subject to expected arrivals and departures.

Dependant on the availability of local staff there may only be a requirement for one member of staff to be live-in to cover night duties but given the current issue of sourcing staff it is not possible to be definitive about the extent of rooms that will be required for staff. At present, due to the lack of lift access, it is likely that the attic space rooms will be used for staff.

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8. FLOOD RISK

The FRA is required for the planning application as a portion of the site (but not the building) is located within the Environment Agency designated Flood Zone 2 located around Pow Beck, which is to the north of the application site.

A short section of the existing access around the property to the northwest, which will be utilised as the new vehicular access, is the only part of the site is within Flood Zone 2. No part of the site is within the Flood Zone 3 area. No part of the building is within Flood Zone 2

The building is located on an area of the site that has not previously flooded at any stage and is not within the Flood Zones 2 & 3. The first level of buildings sleeping accommodation is to be located on the upper ground floor, approximately 2.6m above the level of the surrounding land bordering flood zone 2. Access and escape routes from the overnight accommodation use upper ground floor doors so there is no reliance on exits from the lower ground floor areas which accommodates kitchens, storage and recreation rooms.

We are informed that the building has been in the current ownership for over 70 years, and they have no experience of the building flooding.

Although there is a use class change, the building was used for overnight accommodation and associated kitchen, cleaning, storage and other amenity areas. The proposed use will have similar use patterns and levels of occupancy so there is no significant change in terms of flood risk and building use.

The site is also located in a 2 hectare area of grassed land, some of which forms part of the designated Flood Zone 2 and, further outside the site into Flood Zone 3. This will remain as existing with the proposed application.

Existing surface water drainage will be retained and any new car parking surfaces, with exception of those areas dictated to be 'bound surfaces' by the highways authority, will be permeable surfaces.

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9. CONCLUSION

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.

There is not considered to be any impact on the nearby Listed Buildings within the village from the proposed development site due to the distance between the site and Listed properties, and the existing topography and vegetation in between.

It is considered that the impact upon Grindal House itself is minimal due to scale of the changes proposed to the actual building. The proposed development provides the opportunity for the building to be brought back into a viable use. The development will provide a suitable future use for the whole building which will ensure that it is retained and maintained as a significant Listed Building within a Conservation Area.

It is considered that there is overall benefit from the proposed development from a heritage perspective in terms of the St Bees Conservation Area.

Alterations to the frontage and creation of a new access have recently been approved and are mirrored in this proposal so form an acceptable improvement to the site in terms of highway safety and the minimal affect on the setting of the listed building and 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.

We believe that the proposed development is acceptable and is in accordance with both national and local planning policy.