

PLANNING STATEMENT

DATE : 14 September 2022

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.

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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.

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.

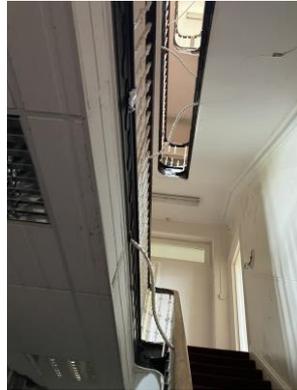
Alterations are required internally to the main building to form the apart-hotel suites. These alterations are mainly removal or alteration to studwork walls, many of them are not original and were added to form the boarding house room divisions and bathrooms. The main alteration is the cutting out of 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.

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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 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

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.

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/OF1 & 4/21/2487/OL1. Additional parking provision is indicated but this is within the curtilage grounds and does not change the proposed route of the approved arrangement.

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.

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.

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7. EMPLOYMENT

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.

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.