

Derek Begent

Our Ref: 24/00833/PREAPP  
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**PROPOSAL: Refurbishment and alteration of existing Public House (The Bell)**

**AT**

**SITE LOCATION: The Bell Ph, The Bury, Odiham, Hook, Hampshire, RG29 1LY**

Dear Derek Begent

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)**

Submitted Documents/ Drawings:

- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans (main building and barn at rear)

**Site description**

The building known as The Bell was formerly a Public House (PH) which stopped trading as a result of the COVID- 19 pandemic in March 2020. Whilst the site and building has evolved in a phased manner over several centuries its established historic use is that of a public house or inn with ancillary related outbuildings.

The building was added to the national heritage list in July 1952 and the history of the site appears to be intertwined with that of Webb House which is also a statutory listed building to which The Bell is adjoined.

At present, the lawful use of the site and buildings is as a public house although currently premises are unoccupied.

**Site and Surrounding Designations/Constraints**

- The site is within the Odiham settlement boundary.
- The site falls within the Odiham Conservation Area.
- The site is occupied by is a Grade II Listed Building.
- The site falls in an area of Significant Archaeological features.

- The building is designated as an asset of community value (ACV)

## **Proposal**

Internal/External alterations to the Grade II Listed Building

### **Relevant Planning Policy**

Adopted Hart Local Plan - Strategy and Sites 2032 (HLP32)

NBE8 - Historic Environment

INF5 - Community Facilities

Saved policies of the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 (HLP 06)

GEN 1 - General Policy for Development

Odiham and North Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2032 (ONWNP)

Policy 6 - Odiham Conservation Area

Policy 13 - Assets of Community Value

Other relevant material considerations

National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Section 66(1) and 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012

Historic England (2008) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment Historic England (2015)

Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment Historic England (2018)

Odiham and North Warnborough Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2022)

### **Considerations**

The preapplication submitted sought to obtain advice on heritage matters only, which is detailed below. The advice below is given according to the site inspection/discussion, which started on the first floor of the building.

It is strongly recommended due to the significance of the building in question and the extensive works being proposed that a heritage consultant who can provide support and advice in preparing a comprehensive heritage statement and feedback on the suitability of proposed works is retained for the duration of any future Listed Building Consent (LBC) application and implementation of any successful LBC. In addition, a full structural survey including a condition report of the building would be required if a LBC application is pursued.

During the site visit a number of alterations to the listed building were discussed which related to building regulations, especially fire. Building Regulations (2010) state in this regard:

"where requirements B1-B5 of Schedule 1 applies to existing buildings, particularly buildings of special architectural or historic interest for which the guidance in this document might prove too restrictive, some variation of the provisions in this document may be appropriate. In such cases, it is appropriate to assess the hazard and risk in the particular case and consider a range of fire safety features in that context".

Given that it is proposed to convert the building to a community use, it is advised that a fire safety advisor is engaged for the project, and if necessary, a fire risk assessment should be submitted as part of any future LBC application. Prior to finalising a proposal, it is recommended that different options are considered to minimise harm to the significance of the listed building.

To help identify the areas discussed during the site visit, and noted within these comments, the relevant bays on the ground (G) and first (F) floor are noted with the principal elevation to the south identified as bay 1.

- First Floor

If it is proposed to use the upstairs rooms as function rooms, this will have implications due to loading within the timber frame building depending on the events that are proposed.

Male and female toilets are proposed within bay F5. It is noted that there is an existing soil pipe within the northwest corner of the room. The floorboards and joists within this room have been identified as being in poor condition and that a new floor needs to be inserted. This matter would need to be addressed within the structural survey required and referred earlier in this report. An area of dry rot was highlighted, which will need to be assessed by a specialist with experience working on listed buildings.

The use of modern plasterboard would not be supported from a conservation perspective. Plasterboard is a non-permeable material which can lead to issues with moisture retention.

The sewerage, fresh water, electrical and ventilation runs would be required, preferably accompanying any future LBC application that is pursued, details about them could potentially be conditioned prior to the commencement of relevant works, if the Council supports any future development proposal that may be submitted.

The ceiling in F5 has been removed in places, with the ceiling joists remaining and the modern bitumen membrane within the roof structure visible. Although the re-tiling of the roof was highlighted as potential works which would seek to remove the membrane, this is unlikely to form part of the forthcoming proposal.

Bitumen membrane is not vapour permeable and can lead to issues with moisture retention. As this area is not always visible any proposal to insert insulation or a covering would need to be detailed carefully to circumvent future issues related to moisture.

It was proposed that the steps from the hall in bay F4 to the room in bay F5 are altered to meet building regulations. The significance of these stairs should be covered within the heritage statement, and any removal justified in accordance with paragraph 200 of the NPPF 2023. Detailed drawings would be required to assess the impact of these works, as well as the structural and fire assessments referred to above.

The floorboards within the hallway of bay F4 add to the historic interest of the building due to their age and good condition. The re-laying or alteration of floorboards within the building identified as being significant would require justification and full details to ensure no damage to the historic interest of the building.

Within bay F4 it is proposed that the door is moved from the landing to the adjacent hallway to allow the pitch of the staircase to be altered. The south and west wall of the room within this bay appear to be constructed from modern materials. However, this would need to be ascertained via opening up works within a consented LBC application. No opening up works should be completed without authorisation from the Council.

Within bay F4 it is proposed that an additional window is inserted and that the chimney breast is removed. In order to assess the harm caused by inserting an additional window, a heritage statement should identify the significance of the fabric to be lost and the potential impact on the architectural and historical value of the listed building. The removal of the chimney breast would be a significant alteration to the building as they are important features of floorplans, demonstrative of the historic use of a building. Such work would not be supported from a conservation perspective.

The site meeting revealed that within bay F4 there is an existing door within the room to bay F5 which is currently blocked up.

As part of the proposal being discussed, the demolition of the existing staircase in bay F4 and the insertion of a new staircase with a different pitch was proposed. There are currently structural timbers visible to both sides of the staircase. Without substantial justification for this demolition and reinstatement this would be unlikely to be acceptable from a conservation perspective.

It is proposed that a new stud wall is inserted within bay F3 to extend the hallway. The floorboards within this room are noted as being of historic interest and in good condition. The floorboards would need to be protected during works and details of the materiality of stud walls and how they would be attached to the listed building provided.

During the site visit it was identified that paint was peeling to the side of the central chimney breast. This could be being caused by moisture and it recommended that this is investigated and, if applicable, forms part of any future LBC application that may be pursued.

From reviewing the photographs and floorplan of the building, it appears that the fireplace within bay 3 has a chimney breast behind it. This may be a later inserted chimney breast, however this would still be of heritage interest. A

LBC application comprising demolition of this section of chimney and insert a door would therefore be unlikely to be supported from a conservation perspective as it would be a substantial negative alteration.

Within bay 2 it was noted that the ceiling has been removed and the lack of insulation was visible. If the insulation within the roofspace is to be improved, natural fibres which are loose laid insulation between the rafters would be acceptable.

The need for fire escape route to the bay 1 was discussed, such assessment should be carried out as part of the fire assessment previously refereed to.

The proposed removal of the infill panels to between the studs between bay 1 and bay 2 would not be supported from a conservation perspective. Removal of historic fabric and the partial demolition of a wall within what is understood to be the oldest bays of the listed building would result in significant loss of fabric and alteration to how the building is experienced.

Bay F1 is potentially very significant as the front bay to the listed building. A proposal to insert or improve insulation would need be vapour permeable whilst causing the minimal loss of historic fabric. Opening up works to identify the materiality of the infill panels may be required as part of a future LBC application and the loss of the currently exposed timbers and any early infill panels within this bay would not be supported from a conservation perspective.

It is noted that the floorboards within this room also appear to add to the historic interest of this bay and are a positive contributor to the character of this bay, as per NPPF 2023 para. 200.

The existing fireplace within F1 bay appears to be a later addition, although chimney breast is not a modern insertion and is of some age. A proposal to alter this would require identification of the fireplace's significance and identification of how the area would be treated.

It is proposed that secondary glazing is inserted into the window on the front elevation. The principle of this would be supported from a conservation perspective subject to traditional and sensitive detailing.

#### - Ground floor

In bay G5 it is proposed to insert a new kitchen, thus details of the service runs for the kitchen would be required prior to determination in order to assess the suitability of the proposal. Aforementioned comments about plasterboard may be relevant here.

Within bay G4 it is proposed a stud wall separating the staircase from the room in order to meet building regulations (fire escape purposes) and the existing sash window are replaced with two casement windows. The replacement of historic windows which appear to be in a maintainable condition would not be supported from a conservation perspective due to the erosion of the significance of the listed building. This was discussed on site and an alternative proposal sought.

The insertion of a dumbwaiter within this room to service ground and first floor was proposed. Whilst there is Insufficient information to assess such alteration and it would be above ceiler, this could potentially be quite damaging to the structure of the building and would need to be fully justified and detailed.

The proposal to insert a door to the external elevation to facilitate a fire escape would need to be fully justified and options considered. This would require changes to the internal floor levels which currently illustrates the phases of development of the building.

In bay G3 where the bar is located, the proposal is for it to remain.

In bay G2 it is proposed that the fireplace is used, this may require an assessment of the condition of the chimney and remedial works. The use of traditional material and methods would support a proposal to sensitively put the fireplace and chimney into active use.

Within G2 the staircase and boxing around the staircase which includes two cupboards, is proposed to be removed. An assessment of the age of the staircase and the significance within the context of the listed building would be required within a LBC application seeking its removal.

Within bay G1 it is proposed that the fireplace is sealed but that the chimney breast remains. The fireplace does not appear original to the building, however it may have some historic interest. The impact that these proposed works would need to be identified and assessed as part of a future LBC application.

Insulation to the external walls was proposed to be added to the height of the existing dado rail. Concerns were raised on site that this may cause thermal bridging and cold spots on the walls which would be subject to condensation. Additional research and detailing may be possible to support insulation within this room in G1.

It is proposed that secondary glazing is inserted into the window on the front elevation. The principle of this would be supported from a conservation perspective subject to traditional and sensitive detailing.

It was observed that the gas meter is located within the southeast corner of the listed building.

## External

It has been identified that the barrel tracks within the entrances to the basement are historic and of historic value and would be considered significant fabric which should be retained.

It is noted that the existing annex is not part of the area subject of this pre-application enquiry. However, the possibility of inserting an access at the rear is possible as there is no initial conservation concerns due to the modern materiality of the wall in question.

It is proposed that the toilet block within the courtyard is demolished. This building has been identified as curtilage listed and the complete loss of the building would erode some of the heritage of the site, and the ability to read the development and changes to the public house historically. The complete loss of this building would therefore result in a significant loss.

It is proposed that the single storey extension to the west of the listed building is altered to provide accessible facilities. This would require a wider door to be inserted and the existing roof form altered. It is understood that this single storey extension is a later addition but a modest and traditional form with minimal encroachment on the elevation of the listed building would be preferred approach from a conservation perspective.

It was outlined during the site visit that it is proposed that seating is erected within the courtyard and the covered passage area. There is no concern over this proposal from a conservation perspective.

It is proposed that the additional brickwork to the arch from the passageway to the courtyard is removed and that the previous arch which is still visible above these bricks is reinstated. Although this would result in a loss of fabric, the additional bricks added to the arch detract from the historic character and due to their lack of cohesive appearance to the original arch are unlikely to result in a historic loss, although it is an interesting building detail which would have structural implications.

A proposal to remove the existing timber doors and fanlight above to the passageway, which are flush to the principal elevation and that new wrought iron gates are inserted was suggested. Although the existing doors are traditionally constructed in timber with recessed beaded moulding. The fanlight above also appears to be a traditional feature and is hinged. Any evidence that illustrates the former appearance of this area of the listed building would be beneficial in understanding the significance of the existing arrangement before advice on their replacement can be provided.

The signage and fixtures to the principal elevation are positive features of the listed building. Although an assessment on the structural stability of the signage may be required, a proposal to remove the signage which are characteristic of a public house would be strongly resisted from a conservation perspective.

Lastly, as you are aware all alterations to discussed at the site meeting and as part of this written advice, require the submission of a LBC application. Queries were raised about whether planning permission would also be required. If there are alterations affecting the fabric of the building externally, e.g. window replacement or alterations to the proportions of the windows and doors, replacement of entrance doors with railings, demolition of the bathroom block, etc, planning permission would be required.

## **CONCLUSION**

Whilst some of the alterations appear acceptable in principle, there are others that raise strong concerns as they would materially affect the significance and character of the building.

It is advised to engage a heritage consultant to discuss further the alterations proposed and consider alternatives or removal of those elements that have been deemed unacceptable.

For those elements that are not raising concerns, additional information would be required at application stage to determine suitability and establish accurately the implications with the fabric of the listed building, along with details of materials intended.

The advice set out above is based on the information submitted but without the benefit of wider consultation or publicity, and so is made without prejudice to the consideration of any future application. Although the advice may indicate the likely issues to be considered in a formal planning application, it is only informal advice, and no guarantees can or will be given about the decision that will be made on any such application.

Yours faithfully

Miguel Martinez  
Place Services