

- a) **DOV/20/01566 – Planning Application: Change of use to and conversion into 3 dwelling-houses with associated parking; first-floor extension to one side with double-hipped roof and associated external/internal alterations**

DOV/20/01567 – Listed Building Consent Application: Alterations to facilitate conversion to 3 residential units

White Cliffs Hotel, High Street, St Margaret's-at-Cliffe

Reason for report: Number of contrary views

b) **Summary of Recommendation**

Planning permission be granted for application reference DOV/20/01566, subject to conditions.

Listed building consent be granted for application reference DOV/20/01567, subject to conditions.

c) **Planning Policies and Guidance**

Legislation

The combined effect of section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) is that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicates otherwise.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that the planning authority should pay special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Development Plan

The statutory development plan comprises:

- Core Strategy (2010) (“**the Core Strategy**”)
- Land Allocations Local Plan (2015) (“**the LALP**”)
- Saved Polices of the Local Plan (2002)

Relevant polices of the Core Strategy include:

- CP2: Provision for Jobs and Homes
- CP4: Housing Quality, Mix, Density and Design
- CP5: Sustainable Construction Standards
- CP6: Infrastructure
- DM2: Protection of Employment Land and Buildings
- DM4: Re Use or Conversion of Rural Buildings
- DM11: Location of Development and Managing Travel Demand

- DM13: Parking Provision

As is the case with the development plan, where existing policies were adopted prior to the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (“**the Framework**”), the weight to be given to them depends on their degree of consistency with the policies of the Framework (paragraph 219).

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

The Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is therefore a material consideration, to which significant weight should be attached in determining the application.

At paragraph 8, the Framework states that sustainable development has three overarching objectives – an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. These are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, seeking net gains across each.

Paragraph 11 identifies a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking, development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless the application of footnote 7 policies provides a clear reason for refusing development, or any adverse impacts of doing so would “significantly and demonstrably” outweigh the benefits. Footnote 8 is clear that for applications involving the provision of housing, the most important policies will be considered to be out of date where a local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply.

Paragraph 38 advises that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, and work pro-actively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Paragraph 60 – to support the Governments objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

Paragraph 81 requires planning policies and decisions to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. In support of a prosperous rural economy, planning should allow the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas; and the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities.

Paragraph 93 – planning should provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities/services the community needs. Decisions should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs.

Paragraph 110 – applications for development should make appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable mode of transport; provide that safe and suitable access for all

users; and seek to mitigate any significant impacts on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion) or on highway safety.

Paragraph 111 – development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Paragraph 119 – planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

Paragraph 126 – the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 131 – trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Paragraph 152 – the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise, vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 180 – if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

Paragraph 199 – great weight should be given the conservation of designated heritage assets.

Paragraph 202 – where a development proposal would 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.

Consultation Draft Dover District Local Plan (2021)

The draft Dover District Local Plan sets out planning policies and proposals for new development in the District over the period from 2020 to 2040 and when adopted will replace the existing development plan. But it is still at an early stage in its preparation, with the Regulation 18 consultation closing on 17 March 2021. In accordance with paragraph 48 of the Framework, whilst the draft Dover District Local Plan is a material consideration, only limited weight should be afforded to it at this time.

d) Relevant Planning History

02/01101 & 02/01102 Erection of single storey kitchen extension to inn; external alterations to ancillary buildings; extension/alterations to ancillary building to create two self-catering units; and revisions to forecourt layout. Planning permission and listed building consent granted (02/12/02).

04/00805 Erection of building [to the side of the main hotel building] to form two units of self-contained holiday accommodation. Planning permission granted (14/09/04) and implemented.

04/00875 Raise height of existing boundary wall, rebuild south west and south east facing elevations, replacement windows, insertion of rooflights, external and internal alterations. Listed building consent granted (06/09/04).

07/00466 Erection of detached dwelling [on land to the rear of the main hotel building]. Planning permission granted (19/10/07).

10/00131 Renewal of planning permission 07/0466 for erection of detached dwelling [on land to the rear of the main hotel building]. Planning permission granted (04/05/10).

19/01112 Erection of two dwellings with associated parking [on land to the rear of the main hotel building]; and change of use and conversion of annexe buildings to two dwellings [to the side of the main hotel building]. Planning permission granted (27/03/20) and implemented.

19/01113 Conversion of two annexe buildings from self-catering accommodation to residential units; internal alterations to remove & insert new partitions, infill & insert new openings to form ground floor living accommodation; replace front elevation door with window. Internal alterations to remove & insert new partitions to form ground floor wc & first floor ensuite, bathroom & bedroom. Insert access gate with new piers to boundary wall. Listed building consent granted (27/03/20) and implemented.

21/01249 Erection of a detached dwelling with driveway, associated parking, cycle shed, and recycle store [on land to the rear of the main hotel building]. Under consideration.

e) **Consultee and Third-Party Representations**

St Margaret's at Cliffe Parish Council

Response of 12/02/21 & 22/02/21

Taken in conjunction with application reference 19/01112, the development would add a total of seven new dwellings to the historic, already crowded centre of the village, which is a Conservation Area. Cripps Lane is a narrow historic lane from which entry onto the High Street is already problematic. The High Street itself is narrow at this point. The proposed conversions of the hotel provide small houses, seeking as many dwellings a possible, and tiny gardens and does not enhance the appearance of this historic building

The Hotel sits in an important cluster of key historic buildings in the heart of the village.

The proposed changes will dramatically alter the hotel's original appearance and fabric.

Development will close a much-loved historic pub both for local residents and for the district's tourism economy. This application seems at odds with DDC's tourism strategy. Draft local plan DM Policy 24 Tourism: '*We will seek to retain and evolve a broad range of high quality serviced tourist accommodation*'

Claims about viability, and the effect on the heart of the village's Conservation Area, need to be strongly and factually evidenced.

Taken with planning application 19/01112, these proposals crowd the site with 7 dwellings and the proposals should be looked at together as a whole.

The application claims it will provide 'much needed housing' but without any evidence of the specific needs in the village or a review of what is actually needed. The last Village Housing Needs survey (2011) identified a need for 39 affordable homes. Since 2011, nine affordable rented units in the village have been sold by the Bay Trust, removing them from the affordable rented sector. Two previous pub conversions in the village centre remain unsold. What is the evidence of need for houses of the size and type proposed in the application?

This proposal fundamentally changes the nature of the buildings and surrounding site which has had the same function and appearance as a single unit since 1885. There are concerns as to the future maintenance of a building which it is proposed would be in multiple ownership for the first time in its history.

The Parish Council believes that the changes proposed in the applications do cause substantial harm and loss to the community, to the street scene in the centre of the village, to the conservation area.

Claims that the hotel business is no longer viable are unsubstantiated. The applicants admit that the building has been in use for letting since April 2020. Claims made in the original application that it was closed and empty from April 2020 until recently, can therefore be discounted. The applicant claims a deterioration in the business makes the asset unviable. This is disputed by the Parish Council.

A well-managed and marketed hospitality business is a viable use of this building.

The applications will cause substantial harm but even if less than substantial harm is argued there is no public benefit from the applications and that the historic use as a bar/restaurant/hotel is the "optimum viable use" for the building and the community.

Supplementary response (undated)

Application 19/01112, granted in 2020, contained condition 15 which required the bar and restaurant in the White Cliffs Hotel to close if the adjacent properties were occupied by residents. But consider the White Cliffs Hotel remains a viable business as a pub/hotel if managed well, if service was better and prices made reasonable.

Dover Core Strategy Policy DM24 seeks for the retention of rural pubs and shops.

The proposals would cause substantial harm to this sensitive site in the centre of the village and conservation area.

Further Response (undated)

A further detailed response has been received from St Margaret's at Cliffe Parish Council, raising matters or amplifying previous concerns in respect of:

- lawfulness of condition 15 of planning permission 19/01112;
- loss of pub/restaurant is not justified;

- impact on special interest & setting of listed building;
- impact on character and appearance of the conservation area; and
- impact on amenities of housing granted under planning permission 19/01112.

Response on Viability Assessment (undated)

The Viability Assessment Report is largely based on the issue of onsite parking space (only allowing 4 out of the 9 guest rooms to be occupied at one time and limiting bar restaurant area to residents only) and only analysing the accounts for March 2019 and March 2020.

The Viability Assessment Report has a number of weaknesses:

- the accounts cover a very limited period;
- assumed that the limited profits and the losses are a result of operating conditions but does not allow for managerial inefficiency or absence of effective marketing or business planning as contributory causes;
- the issue of restricted parking space is undermined by the closure of the bar and restaurant to preserve parking spaces at the front of the main building;
- the Parish Council considers that Condition 15 of planning permission 19/01112 is unlawful and should not be used to justify measures in subsequent planning applications;
- the Smugglers Inn has no car park yet remains open and operates very successfully;
- as the village car park is opposite the hotel, parking is not a determinative issue;
- St Margaret's attracts a high number of visitors and tourists in a normal year;
- efficiently managed amenities should have no problem making profits;
- other potential options such hotel/bar or bar/restaurant or pub with food or takeaway provision, which could provide good business opportunities, are not assessed;
- the viability of the sale of the White Cliffs Hotel business as a going concern has not been fully market tested. There has therefore been no real attempt to sell it as a commercial property/business;
- the Viability Assessment Report fails to take into account the expected increase in demand as we come out of pandemic restrictions; and
- the White Cliffs Hotel continues to operate as a hospitality business, as 'The White Cliffs Retreat'. It is not a lost cause.

DDC Heritage:

The White Cliffs Hotel was originally constructed to provide school classrooms and accommodation as a part of the adjacent Cliffe House School in the C18th & C19th.

The main boarding part of the school was in Cliffe House, accessed across Cripps Lane by a walkway at first floor level which still exists. Since the late C19th the White Cliffs has functioned as a hotel.

The proposal seeks to convert the building into 3no. residential units by subdividing the interior vertically with party walls forming the separation. The works include forming a new front entrance, separate rear gardens and allocated parking to the front. A first-floor extension is proposed by removing the roof of a single storey side addition.

As existing this single storey addition functions as a kitchen to the hotel, as approved and constructed in the early 2000's. The proposed first floor extension is to provide accommodation for the proposed unit 3. The design reflects the character and appearance of the building and replicates the roof form of the existing side additions.

The interior of the building has been significantly altered in the C20th assumed prior to listing. Specific fireplaces appear to survive and are largely unaffected by the proposed works, but the historic plan form and layout does not survive intact. This is particularly of note at first floor level where many of the spaces consist of modern partitioning forming separate bedrooms with ensuite facilities.

Assessment of Impact

The proposal seeks to retain the building's character as much as possible whilst also ensuring it has a viable use forming residential accommodation. The proposed extension is modest and subservient to the listed building, with a simple design with materials that are sympathetic to the character of the listed building.

The building's interior and historic fabric is largely unaffected by the proposed subdivision of the spaces. Also, of note is how the historic spatial quality of the interior is no longer easily read or appreciated due to previous alterations. It is considered that the proposed internal works cause no harm to the significance of the building.

Amended plans have been received that retain a central chimney, which previously was shown to be removed.

Alterations are considered relatively minor but will result in the loss of fabric including inserting a new door and window to the principal south west elevation, alterations to the size of window openings to the 2nd floor side south east elevation, and the re-organisation of internal spaces to form the party wall separation and new stairs access. Due to the extent of alteration to the exterior of the listed building, the very minor amount of fabric affected (majority of which is C20th) and the design of the extension and doors/windows, it is considered that these works would not cause harm.

The proposed first floor extension would form part of the principal south west elevation. It reflects the character of the listed building, with a traditional design and matching materials which is considered appropriate. Its scale and siting do not compete for dominance and is considered to complement the character and appearance of the building. Due to the detailed design and siting of the extension it is considered that there is no harm.

The building's function as a hotel is not considered a significant aspect of its special architectural character.

Impact on the character of the Conservation Area

The White Cliffs Hotel is set back from the main street frontage centrally located within St Margaret's at Cliffe village. The building and its neighbouring 'bunkhouses' are prominent due to their external cladding in white timber weatherboarding, which is distinctive to this site, as the surrounding architecture has a material palette of rendered, brick and in some examples flintwork. Cliffe House is a Grade II listed building and sits adjacent to the White Cliffs Hotel. Opposite the site and across the main High Street on high ground sits the Church of St Margaret.

The proposed first floor extension is sited such that it would not restrict views from public vantage points. There would be clear views of the extension within the conservation area, but the complementary, high standard of traditional design would add to the overall character of this part of the conservation area. The extension is subservient to the White Cliffs Hotel and surrounding buildings and would preserve the character of the conservation area.

The site plan includes the parking for each new residential unit. This proposal is no different to the existing arrangement which currently provides car parking spaces at the front of the building. The subdivision of the rear garden area to create separate gardens for each unit is proposed with fencing/boundary's indicated including bike sheds, bin stores and additional hardstanding. These items are all located to rear of the building with no public views affected. This proposal causes no harm and would preserve the character of the conservation area.

DDC Environmental Health

No objection

DDC Strategic Tourism Manager

While from a tourism point of view the loss is regrettable, it's recognised that the planning considerations need to assess a wider range of issues, including the viability of the existing facility, and in this respect, we have no information to contradict the viability evidence in this case.

KCC Highways:

Confirmed no comments

Southern Water:

No objection

Public Representations

A total of 59 letters of objection to the proposed development have been received which raise the following comments:

- loss of employment opportunities
- increase in traffic
- over development of the site
- lack of community engagement by applicant
- harmful to the conservation area
- viability case has not been made
- loss of vibrant community facility and amenity
- better management of hotel is needed
- lack of parking in the village

- loss of tourism opportunities
- lack of visitor accommodation in the area
- could be a suitable wedding venue
- split ownership will harm the listed building
- other pub conversions difficult to sell

f) The Site and the Proposal

The Site

- 1.1 The site comprises the White Cliffs Hotel, located on the corner of High Street and Cripps Lane in the centre of St Margaret's at Cliff.
- 1.2 The hotel building has two distinctive three storey gables facing High Street, with an asymmetric profile and hipped roof form at the rear. Adjoining the south east flank is a two storey structure (an older part of the building) with a more recent single storey extension in front, each with a simple pitched and hipped roof over.
- 1.3 The planning unit and application site comprises the hotel building described above, along with a gravel forecourt (served by an existing vehicular access from the south western end of Cripps Lane) and garden to the rear. This is consistent with development approved under planning permission reference 19/0112, which allowed the construction of two new houses on land (to the rear) formerly used for car parking, and the change of use / conversion of annex buildings (to the south east) as two independent dwellings.
- 1.4 The hotel building is Grade II listed; and the site is within the St Margaret's at Cliffe Conservation Area. A fuller description of the listed hotel building and conservation area is provided in the comments of DDC Heritage above.

Surrounding Area

- 1.5 Centrally located in the village, the site is within walking distance of local amenities including convenience shop, pub, primary school and public car park.
- 1.6 Opposite the site is the Church of St Margaret (Grade I listed), but generally screened from High Street by a treed hedge; to the rear beyond the former hotel car park is a single storey cottage; to the north west is the more imposing (three storey) building of Cliffe House (Grade II listed); and to the south east, beyond the former hotel annex buildings, is a row of terraced houses.

Proposed Development

- 1.7 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought (as two separate applications) for (i) the change of use and conversion of the hotel building to three residential dwellings; (ii) a first floor addition to the adjoining single storey extension; and (iii) other internal and external works / alterations to the listed building.
- 1.8 The building would be divided vertically, with:
- unit 1 (four bed) on the north western side, over three floors, which would utilise the existing main front door and staircase;
 - unit 2 (four bed) in the centre, again over three floors, for which a new front door and new staircase would be provided; and

- unit 3 (three bed) on the south eastern side of the building, over two floors, including a new front door and internal staircase.
- 1.9 Other alterations to the exterior of the building include a new ground floor window on the front elevation for unit 2, a set of doors on the rear elevation for unit 1, and the enlargement of two first floor windows on the south eastern flank elevation.
- 1.10 Internally, main alterations include:
- ground floor: removal of ground floor bar fittings and toilets, some partition walls and kitchen facilities; construction of new dividing walls between the three units; and installation of two new staircases;
 - first floor: removal of hotel bathrooms and some partition walls, as well as removal of area of floor to accommodate the new staircases;
 - second floor: removal of hotel bathrooms and some partition walls.
- 1.11 Existing vehicular access to the site would be retained, with six car parking spaces to be provided for the three dwellings in arrangement similar to the current situation.
- 1.12 To the rear, the existing garden would be divided into three, with each divided area providing for cycle and bin storage.
- 1.13 The reinstatement of a historic gate on the north western boundary wall is proposed, as is a new gate onto Cripps Lane to provide rear access to each of the gardens.
- 1.14 Drawings and other information for the application include:
- 29870A_100 A Existing Site Plan
 - 29870A_101 A Existing Floor Plans
 - 29870A_102 Existing Elevations & Sections
 - 29870A_103 & 104 Existing Phasing Plan
 - 29870A_107 B Proposed Floor Plans Demolition
 - 29870A_108 A Proposed Elevations Demolition
 - 29870A_111 B Proposed Floor Plans
 - 29870A_116 A Proposed Elevations
 - 29870A_200 Proposed Parking
 - 29870A_109 A Proposed Site Plan
 - Heritage Statement
 - Design & Access Statement
 - Viability Assessment Report

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The main issues in the consideration of this application are:
- loss of hotel
 - suitability of the site for residential
 - impact on listed building and conservation area
 - other matters
 - planning balance / conclusion

Assessment

Loss of Hotel

- 2.2 The proposed loss of the hotel use is considered in the context of the challenges facing Dover's local economy, as highlighted by the Core Strategy (paragraph 2.67): that the economy lags behind other parts of the county, is polarised between low and higher value businesses, and has an under developed tourism sector (with the District seen as a transit location rather than destination).
- 2.3 The Core Strategy presents (paragraph 3.25) the considerable opportunity to encourage economic growth through tourism, including by enhancing the overall hotel offer and better promotion of the District's historic and natural assets.
- 2.4 The Council's more recent 'Growth strategy for tourism and the visitor economy' sees hotel development as an important component of a wider economic strategy, although with greatest focus on new larger 4/5* schemes.
- 2.5 The emerging Local Plan is consistent with this economic strategy, promoting new hotels, or improvements to existing ones, to enhance the quality of accommodation and increase the number of visitors and their length of stay.
- 2.6 However, against this general support, regard must be had to the specific constraints and limitations of the White Cliffs Hotel on the site.
- 2.7 The applicant considers the hotel is not a commercially viable enterprise for a number of structural reasons as presented in a submitted 'Viability Assessment Report' – that:
- there are only six car parking spaces to serve the hotel guests and staff;
 - offsite car parking is extremely limited and cannot be relied upon;
 - due to a lack of car parking only four guest rooms are likely to be occupied at any one time;
 - the bar/restaurant is restricted to use by hotel guests only, and cannot generate wider income¹; and
 - the upkeep of the listed building is relatively expensive.
- 2.8 Of note to the restriction of the use of the bar/restaurant, is the position presented by the applicant for application 19/01112 (including to allow the conversion of the annexe buildings to residential) – that:
- just visitor accommodation on the first floor (five bedrooms), with staff accommodation on the second floor, was sought, along with the proposed restriction of the bar/restaurant to be for resident use only;
 - those changes to the arrangement of the building were to seek to resolve financial viability issues (by scaling down the hotel); and

¹ Condition 15 of planning permission 19/01112 requires that the bar and restaurant within the hotel shall cease to offer facilities to non-residents on occupation of the dwellings permitted (change of use of the annex buildings or new build houses to the rear), and shall thereafter only be available for the use of residents of the hotel. Reason: to ensure adequate car parking facilities are available.

- the level of car parking retained for the hotel would be adequate for that scaled down business.
- 2.9 In considering application 19/01112, Planning Committee considered the impacts of the loss of the bar/restaurant for public use, but placed weight on there being (as identified in the officers' report) *"a number of outlets in St Margaret's that provide a range of choices for people wishing to eat out"*. It was considered that *"In this instance it would be difficult to mount an argument that the changes proposed here would significantly harm the viability of the settlement or mean that it fails to meet its day-to-day needs."*²
- 2.10 In respect of the Viability Assessment Report submitted with this application, it considers a 'Fair Maintainable Trade' for the hotel and bar/restaurant combined is £90,000 per annum, with a 'Fair Maintainable Operative Profit' of £12,000 (reflecting the disproportionate costs compared to low level of occupancy and restrictions on the bar/restaurant).
- 2.11 Officers have challenged assumptions of the Viability Assessment Report that the public car park opposite and general wider on-street car parking would allow for greater occupation of the seven guest bedrooms, with greater turnover in the bar/restaurant.
- 2.12 In response, the Viability Assessment Report has carried out some sensitivity testing of such greater occupation in how that would increase 'Fair Maintainable Trade' (to up to £150,000 with full occupancy) and 'Fair Maintainable Operative Profit' (to up to £41,000 with full occupancy). However, the Viability Assessment Report considers that even at this greater level of return, this still equates to a level of income for a 'two person partnership' running the hotel that is less than the national living wage.
- 2.13 In aiding its robustness, the Viability Assessment Report identifies that the calculations do not include any allowance for finance/borrowing costs (i.e. any mortgage taken by prospective hotel owners against the property or other business loan), which the applicant considers would be challenging to repay against the low level of potential return.
- 2.14 Some reference to historic hotel accounts are presented in the Viability Assessment Report, but these are considered by the applicant to provide poor evidence to assess current/future viability because the size and arrangement of the hotel has materially altered following the implementation of development under planning permission 19/01112.
- 2.15 In these circumstances (even if the car parking position was resolved or the limitations of car parking were to affect the occupation of the hotel to a lesser extent), it is considered by officers that sufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the ongoing use of the hotel is unviable.
- 2.16 The detailed responses from St Margaret's at Cliffe Parish Council, which reflect wider representations from the local community – that the loss of hotel along with its restaurant/bar should be prevented – are noted. But against the considered viability position, these do not provide grounds or reasoning to resist the loss of the hotel in principle. (Other matters raised including the impact of the development on the

² In these circumstances, officers are satisfied that Condition 15 of planning permission 19/01112 satisfies the relevant tests that is necessary, relevant to planning and the development, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

heritage significance of the listed building and conservation area are considered below.)

- 2.17 The submission of the Parish Council that condition 15 of 19/01112 should not be relied upon as restricting the use/occupation of the bar/restaurant is also noted. But as a condition imposed by the Council (as local planning authority) in the previous grant of planning permission, it is not now able to ignore that. If material weight was to be placed on a position predicated on the breach of that planning condition, such a position would not be a reasonable one.
- 2.18 Therefore, no objection is raised to the loss of the existing hotel use on the site for the reasons explained above.

Suitability of the Site for Residential

- 2.19 Core Strategy Policy DM4 encourages the re-use or conversion of buildings (including for private residential use) within villages, especially where that building positively contributes to the local character.
- 2.20 As the existing building clearly enhances the special character of the St Margret's at Cliff Conservation Area, as well as being Grade II listed and of significant architectural merit, its conversion and reuse (where it is demonstrated the hotel is unviable) is consistent with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy DM4.
- 2.21 In terms of being within the built up area of the village, walking distance of local services/amenities and with opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of travel (with regular bus services between Dover and Sandwich), the site is considered a suitable location for the small number of houses that would be created.
- 2.22 Each house would have a reasonably sized and private garden to the rear, as well as a suitable arrangement for the storage of refuse bins and cycles.
- 2.23 The new and enlarged windows at first and second floor height on the south eastern elevation can reasonably be conditioned to be obscured glazed and so would not result in a material loss of privacy to the adjacent houses to the south east.

Impact on the Listed Building and Conservation Area

- 2.24 Externally, proposed changes to the listed building and its curtilage are considered limited.
- 2.25 The first floor extension on the south eastern flank is subservient to the main building, and sympathetic in its roof form and proposed use of materials. Other external alterations of the insertion of new doors and windows are minor, and again sympathetically detailed and would not have more than a limited impact on the appearance of the building.
- 2.26 The Heritage Officer also advises that the building's function as a hotel (given it previously was part of a school) is not considered a significant aspect of its special architectural character. The building does not display any historic features that can be considered to define its function either as a hotel or as originally designed (as school rooms) and therefore it is considered that there is no harm to the significance of the listed building as a result of the change of use.

- 2.27 The division of the rear garden and introduction of domestic accoutrements is again considered to have a minor and limited impact upon the setting if of the listed building.
- 2.28 With all aspect of the proposed development taken together, it is considered that no harm would be caused to the significance of the listed building.
- 2.29 In relation to the surrounding conservation area, the proposed development (with regard to the comments of the Heritage Officer) would cause no harm and preserve its recognised and special character.

Listed Building Consent Application

- 2.30 Paragraph 195 of the NPPF requires the local planning authority to assess the significance of a heritage asset and take this into account when determining proposals which affect a heritage asset. Under paragraph 197 a local planning authority is required to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.31 The White Cliffs Hotel was originally constructed to provide school classrooms and accommodation as a part of the adjacent Cliffe House School and has functioned as a hotel since the late 19th Century. The interior of the building has been significantly altered in the 20th Century with alterations to the historic planform to facilitate the hotel function, including large open plan spaces to the ground floor, and in respect of internal features, only some historic fireplaces survive.
- 2.32 The proposal seeks to convert the listed building into three residential units, provide a new front entrance and first floor extension to the rear over an existing modern addition which currently forms the hotel kitchen.

Assessment of Harm

- 2.33 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF requires that the significance of a listed building should be given great weight in assessing the impacts of development.
- 2.34 Due to the extensive previous alterations to the interior of the listed building and consequential impact on the original character of the spaces, the proposed subdivision is not considered to cause harm. Amended plans have been secured that retain a prominent central chimney that originally was shown to be removed. The proposed extension has been designed sensitively so that it forms a natural addition to the listed building. Other external alterations will result in very limited loss of fabric of which the majority is 20th Century in date. The detailed design of the door and windows is traditional. It is therefore considered that there will be no harm to the significance of the listed building.

Other Matters

- 2.35 For three houses, six car parking spaces (positioned across the front of the site as is the existing arrangement) is considered appropriate to accommodate the likely level of parking demand.
- 2.36 Vehicular access close to the corner of High Street / Cripps Lane remains unaltered.

2.37 There is no objection from Southern Water re foul drainage, with general infrastructure demand being similar or no greater than the existing use.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Dealing first with the loss of the hotel use: whilst that would have some impact on local economic activity, the Viability Assessment Report is considered to provide sufficient justification (for structural and site specific reasons) to demonstrate that the hotel as an ongoing/future business is unable to generate sufficient trade and revenue to be considered viable.

3.2 In these circumstances, Core Strategy Policy DM4 encourages the reuse/conversion of existing buildings in general; and as a listed building paragraph 190 of the Framework identifies the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of a heritage asset, seeking a viable use consistent with its conservation.

3.3 The change and conversion of the listed building from a hotel to three dwellings is considered a viable use – one that will conserve its heritage significance (as a public benefit) as well as making effective use of previously developed land in a suitably sustainable location. The proposed works would cause no harm to the historic or architectural character or appearance of the listed building.

g) Recommendation

Application 20/01566

I That PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to conditions to include:

1. Standard time limit
2. List of approved plans
3. Material samples
4. Details of improvements to north west boundary wall
5. Fencing details for internal gardens
5. Fenestration and new door details, including joinery
7. Construction Management Plan
8. Surface water drainage details
9. Parking spaces – provision and retention
10. Bin and cycle storage in accordance with approved plans

II Powers to be delegated to the Planning and Development Manager to settle any necessary planning conditions in line with the issues set out in the recommendation and as resolved by the Planning Committee.

Application 20/01567

I That LISTED BUILDING CONSENT BE GRANTED subject to conditions to include:

1. Standard time limit
2. List of approved plans
3. Material samples
4. Fenestration and new door details, including joinery
5. Details of new staircase to house on plot 2 and plot 3

- II Powers to be delegated to the Planning and Development Manager to settle any necessary planning conditions in line with the issues set out in the recommendation and as resolved by the Planning Committee.

Case Officer

Andrew Somerville