

Design and Access Statement & Historic Impact Assessment

The Grove, Falmouth



March 2021

CHARTERED BUILDING SURVEYORS

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CHARTERED BUILDING SURVEYORS

1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared by RTP Surveyors to support a listed building application and change of use application at The Grove, Falmouth. The Grove comprises of no. 1 and no. 2 Grove Place which were combined in the 1950s to formulate the guest house. The lower ground floor comprises a residential property occupied by the proprietors.

This application seeks to adjust the ratio of residential accommodation and let accommodation in the building, subsequently undoing the works from 1950 and 2008 so that no. 1 and no. 2 will once again be separated from each other.

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2.0 Architectural and Historic Interest

The property comprises of an end-terrace building which we understand was constructed in the early 1800's. The guesthouse is arranged on three floors with an additional single storey extension added to the rear. The date of this construction has not been confirmed, however the materials used would suggest it was added within the last 60 years.

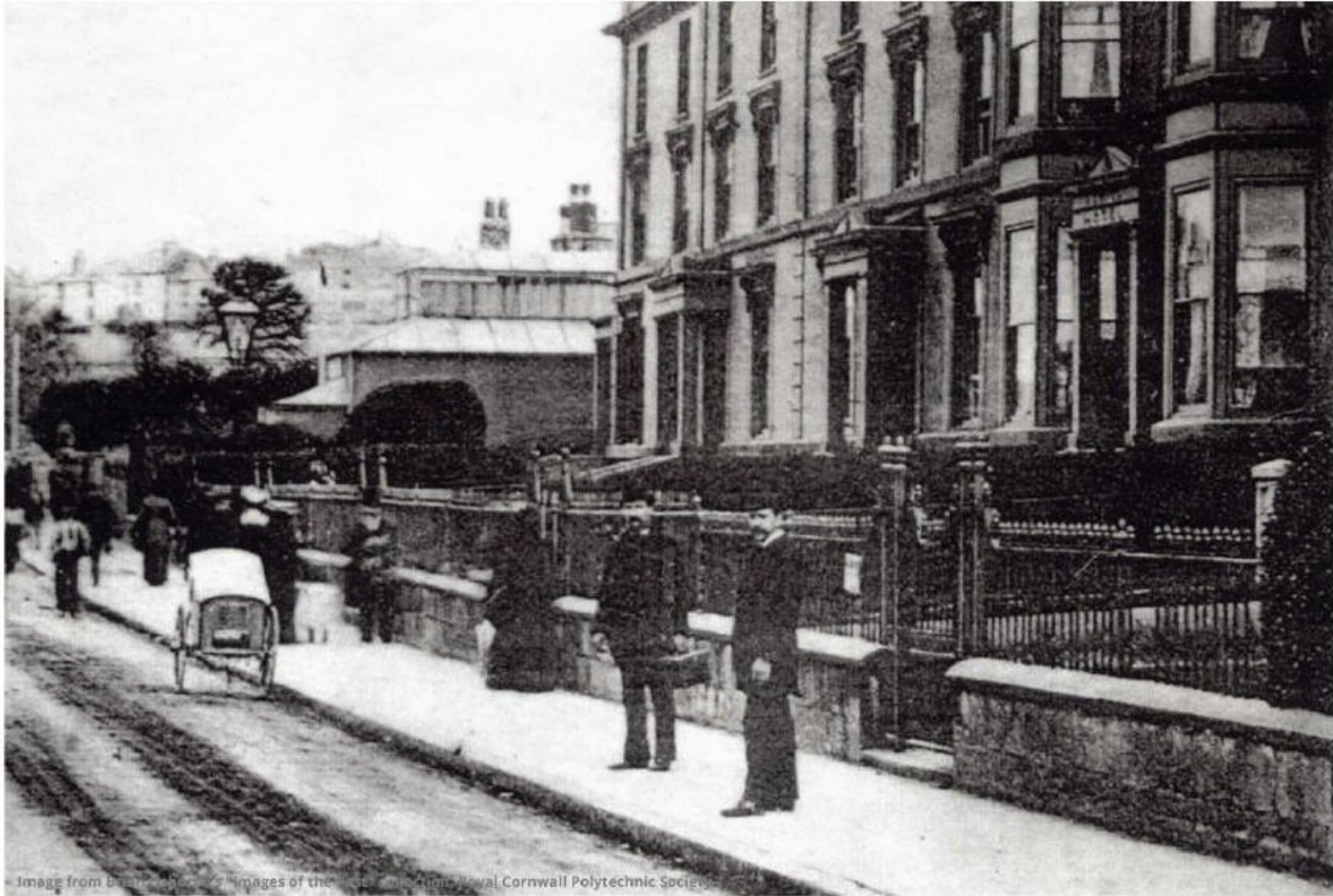
The property is provided with a slate clad roof supported off a cut timber truss roof frame. The walls are of cut solid stone work with concrete block walls to the extension. The floors are of timber suspended construction.

No. 1 and no. 2 were originally constructed as large residential properties and form a terrace of similar properties which were listed in 1973 under list entry number 1270060 which reads:

"Terrace of 7 large houses, most now in commercial use. 1840s. Stucco on rubble; brick end and axial stacks. Double-depth plan. 3 storeys over basement; 2:2:3:3:3:3: 3-window range. Channelled rustication to basement, end pilasters, ground and 1st-floor sill bands and architraves with cornices and 1st-floor consoles; moulded parapet cornice. Original hornless sashes with glazing bars to Nos 1-3, 5 & 6. No.4 has late C19 2-storey canted bays at left and right and C20 windows to 2nd floor. No.7 has late C19 2-storey canted bay under 2 close-set 2nd-floor windows on the right; original sashes to 2nd floor, otherwise later sashes. All have original porches with square columns and anthemion-decorated pediments; porches central to Nos 3-6, left of No.2 and at far left and right. Panelled doors with overlights. INTERIOR not inspected."

Of particular merit is the largely unspoilt front elevation as demonstrated in a comparison of photographs from 1890 and the present day.

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Circa 1890



Present day

In 1950 the two dwellings were combined to form a guesthouse. The works undertaken to combine the two properties was very minimal. A single doorway was opened up through the party wall on each of the first and second floors to link the passageways together. This work was undertaken prior to the listing in 1973.

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Aside from the very minimal internal change, the appearance remained largely unchanged as it does today. With each side of the guesthouse retaining its own front door and symmetrical window arrangement.

The guesthouse was formulated from the three above ground storeys with the basement level providing owners accommodation. In 2008, listed building consent was sought to form a further opening between the two buildings, this time at basement level to improve the owners accommodation. This work was subsequently carried out.

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3.0 Schedule of Proposed Works and Justification of Impact

This application seeks to undo the works undertaken in the 1950s and 2008 in order to reinstate the property as two separate buildings. Although consent was granted in 2008 for the basement connection, English Heritage were opposed the plan and commented the following.

“English Heritage does not normally support changes to the historic plan-form of terraced houses particularly where this would entail, as appears to be the case here, loss of historic integrity. The basements were generally designed effectively as their ‘engine-houses’.”

“English Heritage has generally resisted the breaching of party walls as there is a general presumption against allowing horizontal connection between terraced houses. The separation of the units that make up a terrace composition are one of its defining characteristics. We recommend that the guidance in PPG15 C.18 should be followed in such cases thus respecting the integrity of the historic plan form.”

Therefore, any works undertake to reverse the connections, both pre and post listing should be seen favourably in terms of protecting the heritage asset.

Specifically, the physical works are as follows:

3.1 Basement Level

- i) Infill of opening in party wall.

As noted previously, this work was undertaken in 2008 under application number C1/LB02/1973/08/B. Following consultation with a Fire Safety Consultant, the proposed infilling of the doorway would be formed by adding a fire door on each face of the wall which would be permanently locked. This would achieve 1 hour fire resistance between the properties with the void between them creating a resistance to sound transmission.

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3.2 Ground Floor Level

i) Creation of two internal lobbies.

Bedrooms 17 and 18 currently have doors which open directly onto an open staircase. Following review by the Fire Safety Consultant it is proposed that small internal lobbies are created within each of these bedrooms which will give 30 minutes fire resistance. The internal doors will be held open on auto-holders linked to the fire alarm system. These will then automatically close in the event of a fire. The lobbies will be constructed from timber clad with Fireline plasterboard and skim. No historic fabric will be disturbed or lost as part of the creation of the lobbies and it is work which can easily be removed in the future if required.

3.3 First Floor Level

i) Infill of opening in party wall.

This opening was created as part of the 1950s works. The works to close the opening would be the same as noted above. The following photographs show the opening from both sides. There are no original historic features that would be lost as a result of the infill works.



First floor party wall opening to be infilled with pair of false doors.

ii) Upgrade door to fire door.

This relates to the cupboard on the first floor. The existing door is to be removed and replaced with an FD30 fire door. The existing door to this room is a flush panel door of modern construction

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and has no historic merit. The replacement fire door to this ancillary room is proposed as a 6 panel fire door to match those found throughout the property which is much more in-keeping.

iii) Creation of one internal lobby.

Bedroom 5 also requires the creation of an internal lobby as described above for bedrooms 17 and 18. Again, no historic fabric will be lost or disturbed and the works can easily be removed in the future if required.

iv) Additional fire door in corridor.

An additional fire door is required in the corridor between bedroom 8 and the stair well. Again this will be installed with an auto-holder linked to the fire alarm system.

3.4 Second Floor Level

i) Infill to party wall at second floor level.

This opening was also created in the 1950s and the works would again be the same as noted previously for infilling with false doors. Photographs of the second floor opening are below.



Second floor party wall opening to be infilled.

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Aside from the physical works will be undertaken, it is also important to consider the impact on the heritage asset of the proposed change of use. In this regard, the building already constitutes a mixture of residential accommodation and let accommodation and this will not change as a result of the works. If anything, the increase in residential accommodation and decrease in let accommodation is akin to the originally intended purpose of the building in 1890 as a large dwelling.

In consideration of both the physical alterations and the change of use alteration we conclude that there is no adverse effect on the listed asset. In fact, the proposal is an improvement to the building by separating the premises from each other, undoing alteration works and re-purposing back to residential accommodation as its original purpose.

Consultation with a Fire Safety Officer has been sought at an early stage to ensure that the proposed works are compliant and necessary.

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4.0 Design and Access

4.1 Relevant Planning History

As noted previously, listed building consent was sought in 2008 to formulate the link between the two properties at basement level. The application number was C1/LB02/1973/08/B.

There are various other planning applications and listed building consents available but they are not considered relevant to this current application.

4.2 Assessments

4.2.1 Physical Context

The property fronts one of the main streets through Falmouth and is centrally located within the town. The terrace of properties are set back from the road and pavement with gravelled courtyards and planting to the front. There is on road parking adjacent to the building, there is also a large Council car park opposite.

The property spans over four floors, a basement and three upper levels. Externally the physical appearance of the building will not change as part of the proposed works.

4.2.2 Social and Economic Context

The applicant was born in Falmouth and has historic family roots in the area, most notably she is daughter to David Roberts, chaplain to the Docks and The Mission to Seafarers'. Together with her husband they have occupied and run the guest house for circa 20 years and it has been a thriving and well known building on the highstreet. However, in recent years Falmouth has been flooded with small to medium scale holiday let accommodation and the income generated by the guesthouse no longer warrants the 18 bedroom facilities currently on site.

The applicants wish to remain at The Grove and continue the running of the guesthouse, also looking to reside at No. 1 in future retirement. In order for this to be a feasible operation, the balance of let accommodation and residential accommodation must be addressed. The change of use of part of the property back to residential use is the most economic solution for the family and enables them to stay at the property. As a large family, the additional residential space gained would also greatly improve their standards of living.

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4.2.3 Planning Policy Context

The most notable policy relevant to this application is The Falmouth Neighbourhood Plan, specifically policy BE 4: Protection of existing stock of holiday accommodation. There are two points of action noted in this regard, firstly one must “promote and refer to the criteria” for the application. Secondly “monitor the proposals height, scale, massing, orientation and location, impact on the established density in the area, and the establishing building line facing on to the seafront”. As the buildings will fully continue to exist in their current form following the partial change of use there is not considered to be any alteration in this regard.

It is important to take into consideration that the guesthouse will not be lost entirely, merely the balance of accommodation altered. The main driver for the application is the additional holiday let stock which has come onto the market so the partial change of use will not have an overall effect of the availability in the town. The following table indicates the exact changes which will be made to the proportions.

Existing

Floor	Total area (m ²)	Residential area (m ²)		Let area (m ²)	
Basement	251.4	251.4	100%	0	0%
Ground	170.6	0	0%	170.6	100%
First	162.3	0	0%	162.3	100%
Second	161.2	0	0%	161.2	100%
TOTAL	745.5	251.4	34%	494.1	66%

Proposed

Floor	Total area (m ²)	Residential area (m ²)		Let area (m ²)	
Basement	251.4	146.6	58%	104.8	42%
Ground	170.6	94.4	55%	76.2	45%
First	162.3	94.4	58%	67.9	42%
Second	161.2	89.1	55%	72.1	45%
TOTAL	745.5	424.5	57%	321.0	43%

Therefore the total loss of let accommodation as a result of the change of use is 23% which is not considered to be significant.

The Falmouth Local Plan Policy BE 4 reads “the conversion of hotels and guesthouses to uses other than holiday accommodation will not be approved where they have an adverse impact on the tourist character of the area”. On reflection of the figures above it is felt that the proposal cannot be deemed to have an ‘adverse impact’. It should also be noted that the terrace of properties to which The Grove belongs has a variety of existing uses including hotels, bars, restaurants and two fully residential properties.

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4.3 Involvement

Given the scale of the proposed changes it was not considered necessary to seek the views of the wider local community prior to submission of the application.

4.4 Design

There are no design parameters to consider as part of the application as no external changes will be made.

4.5 Access

Access to no. 1 and no. 2 will remain as existing, via the respective front doors on the principal elevation. Access throughout the properties has been considered in line with advice from a Fire Safety Consultant whose recommendations have been included as part of the proposal.

5.0 Conclusion

No. 1 and No.2 Grove Place were originally constructed as individual large dwellings and form part of the listed terrace of properties. This application seeks to revert the works carried out to merge the properties together so that they can once again be separated. This can only improve and protect the heritage asset. The works proposed to do so are minor in nature and do not involve removal of historic fabric. The additional measures necessary to conform to Fire Safety requirements have been designed to be discreet and again do not involve the removal of historic fabric.

In terms of Planning Policy, it is considered that the change of use is minimal, being a loss of only 23% of let accommodation. This will not have a negative affect on the surrounding area which already supports a variety of uses.