



33 MAIN STREET, LARGS, KA30 8AE

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
PROPOSED BOUTIQUE HOTEL,
LIFT INSTALLATION & ROOF TERRACE DOME.**

Client : Sanote Ltd

O/R : 001/23/DNA – BHD/1

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Historic Scotland Listing :

Building listed (Category 'B') 08/09/1982

Listing Ref : LB 37183

Source I.D. : 382206

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1/ General Overview & Historical Context.

Having dominated the Largs streetscape for almost 125 years, No. 33 remains a significant feature within the Main Street streetscape and is a true testimony to the display of wealth and vision of Mr Thomas Mackay, who commenced work on the site after demolishing the previous unassuming building to make way for what is now the central three and a half storey section of the present configuration.

He later in about 1926 acquired and removed the two buildings at either side to create the additional two storey wings, which resulted in the now seamless symmetrical massing.

The building initially housed at ground level a shop for the purveyance of bakery and confectionery goods, with the first floor containing three tearooms and a 'piping' room.

The central second floor was utilized as a functions room and the third was a base for the 'Largs Business Club', further reinforcing its significance within the town.

The building operated and thrived, serving the needs of a period where the town was a significant seasonal recreation destination, being served by readily available rail connections directly from all areas and particularly from the Glasgow conurbation.

In addition to this it was the main port for ferry access to the Cumbraes and in particular the popular Millport destination.

As times however changed and more exotic locations became accessible, like so many other seaside towns, there was an inevitable decline in visitors and those that did come, had different expectations and requirements.

The first major intervention in the evolution of the building complex, was in 1973 when it was leased from a property group by the 'Stakis Organisation' to be part of their 'Steakhouse, chain and as well as having various ad-hoc physical changes, yet again changes in public service expectations resulted in the business failing to match requirements.

Around this time various key features were either removed or masked to suit operational needs, including the removal of the glazed cupola from above the now restaurant area to allow the formation of the roof terrace and the replacement of the main stairway glazed dome with an inferior fiberglass pastiche.

Other prominent features were lost, such as the stone external balustrades from the central bay windows, presumably as in such disrepair they were considered as too much of a financial commitment for restoration.

With the onset of additional building standards requirements, there were around this time further internal interventions in relation to compartmentation as well as the covering of the large area of mosaic flooring with a raised timber alternative.

Following it's financial non-viability as a large complex, in 1979 the ground floor was acquired by the 'Royal Bank of Scotland' and major elevational changes were carried out to the ground floor level elevation.

A façade contemporary for the period was imposed, resulting in the removal of the marble cladding to be replaced with the now present pink and grey mottled granite, used frequently in this period, as well as clinical white tiling and modernist window configurations.

This along with other interventions such as the poor quality entrance canopy and doorway to No. 33, resulted in a significant loss to the former grandiosity once appreciated at this level.

By the mid 80's , two significant local Italian families were to acquire the building, which for a time operated as a health centre and nightclub.

Over the next 17 years, the building was transferred between various property companies, who whilst recognizing it's significance and potential, failed to provide the level of input required to maintain the integrity of it's fabric.

It's period of inactivity was finally brought to a close, when in 2003 it was acquired by Mr Stephen McDonald who until being transferred to our client, operated the main areas of the building as a successful restaurant, bar and nightclub venue.

By the nature and scale of the building, Mr mcDonald utilised what areas were necessary to allow the chosen functions to operate, however large areas of the building remained uncared for or developed since neglected by previous acquisitions and it is to this we look to address and inject a sensitive and positive regeneration of the complex to in some way redress past negative interventions and exploit fully it's potential for the future, based upon it's internal and external visual and spacial assets.

The public will once again be allowed an insight into the glory of a bygone era, but within the context of an enlightened business framework capable of meeting the needs of current expectations and beyond.

2/ Design Criteria – Conservation Vs Restoration

As at various key stages in the building's history, the client who has recently achieved acquisition is essentially a family run business with close ties to the local area and apart from looking to create a viable business plan, also possesses a passion for maintaining and revitalizing the traditional and unique features that the building possesses, both externally and internally. The development concept is based essentially on refurbishing the prime existing bar, restaurant and function areas, whilst encompassing the long neglected upper floors as a boutique hotel, to both complement these areas and optimize the available accommodation.

From inception, in formulating the basic criteria for the development, it was clear that in tandem with sensitivity the aspect of accessibility would have to be addressed. Not only to comply with current expected standards, but to ensure all members of the public may be accommodated and benefit from the facilities to be provided.

As experienced designers, we are clearly aware of the listing implications, but having closely researched the evolution and history of the building, it is clear and to a considerable degree unfortunate that the 1982 'snapshot in time', occurred at a period when considerable physical intervention had occurred to the detriment of the early building configuration and structural intent.

It is therefore our intention to look to a degree in retrospect more to the period where the building exhibited now absent features and elements which both enhanced and reinforced it's prominence.

In terms of the front elevation, it is clear that 70's interventions at ground floor level dramatically intervened to downplay the exploitation of verticality and transparency and it is our wish to in some way pay homage to the original intent within the confines of the entrance area attributed to No.33 and give a clear insight into the grandiosity within.

As previously noted, there have been significant elements removed from this façade, such as the stone balustrading to the restaurant window bays and the diamond shaped stone pediment features from the central gable.

It is unfortunate that we cannot, due to the financial commitment involved, look to totally reinstate all these items, but in this instance we must address the remedial works carried out in these areas and ensure they are redone using traditional materials and techniques.

Overall the sandstone façade is in relatively sound condition, however on close examination it is clear that large areas have been-over masked with a layer of 'Liner stone', which as we are now aware can cause damage to the underlying porous stonework by preventing the natural 'breathing' process and subsequent spalling as moisture becomes trapped between coating and structure.

To this end we propose a 'mild' pressure wash to remove the liner stone skin and expose the underlying stonework, which appears in itself to be sound at this stage.

To complete the restorative approach to the frontage, we already have obtained approval to install replicated traditional timber sliding sash window units.

At the roof terrace area, it is our intention to provide a transparent enclosure, somewhat reminiscent of the previous glazed lantern style cupola that originally allowed light to penetrate the deep restaurant plan. This will allow use of this area to be less weather dependent and again look to recreate a more historically accurate element.

The rear elevation currently exists as a myriad of materials, imposed at various stages within the complex evolution and it is our intention to rationalize and unify the finishes, predominantly using painted wet render, with application of smooth banding at windows.

As the existing windows to this elevation are predominantly u.p.v.c., it is our intention to replace with like, but more traditionally configured and to a higher energy efficiency.

The installation of an accessible lift requires the creation of a visually significant tower element and to ensure in keeping with the importance of this as a prime area of access, we look to highlight this by introducing 'red stone effect' block at ground level and a more discreet cladding element above, coloured to be a contrast with the adjacent rendered areas.

3/ Proposals :

With due consideration of the existing internal features, it is incumbent on ourselves to not only increase the accessibility of the building but also to provide suitably accessible sanitary facilities and this is to be provided at the first floor level as shown.

The first floor level public areas were originally fully laid with decorative mosaics and due to subsequent dislodgement and internal reconfigurations, only an area at the main stair landing and a stretch within the bar area are currently visible, as the remaining areas have been overlaid with timber planking.

It is our intention to in some way highlight the quality and true colour of the mosaic areas by carrying out an intense cleaning operation and subsequent sealant. The remaining raised timber flooring, as well as the considerable areas of wall panelling shall be carefully stripped of decades worth of varnish and residue, to be refinished highlighting the various qualities and types of timber used over the period of building evolution.

The introduction of the 'Boutique Hotel' accommodation, gives us the opportunity to not only include various existing features, but reuse various sections of decorative panelling, which have been set aside following previous removal and additional period features and panelling which have been salvaged from other similarly aged premises and been stored within the building.

In essence, we look to carry out the further development as a means of reinforcing the restorative aspect of the process and continuing the traditional quality of finishes beyond the current extent.

4/ Summary & Conclusions.

In conclusion, we would confidently submit the accompanying proposals and trust that it has been made clear that all aspects of intent show an intense and respectful focus on the true integrity of the building, whether this is in respect to the current appearance or showing a passionate degree of historical homage and reflection.

5/ Appendix 'A' - Photographic Record



Pre- 1920s Streetscape, Showing One of The Adjacent Buildings Later to be Demolished to Create The Two Storey Wing Addition



Street Frontage 1920's Showing the original Upper Tearoom
Cupola Roof-light Lantern, The Now Removed First Floor Stone
Balustrading and The Pediment Features No Longer In Place.
Showing Also The Increased Level And Height of Glazing At Ground
Floor Level.



Street View 1950's Showing First Floor Stone Balustrades And Pinnacles Still In Position & Considerable Ground Level Glazing With Retractable Shades.



Current Street View Showing First Floor Stone Balustrades And Pinnacles Removed & Ground Level Glazing Dramatically Reduced By Post 1970's Interventions.



Rear Elevation Showing Myriad Of Finishes & Physical Interventions

