

44 The Terrace, Gravesend, DA12 2BJ.

Former Crown & Thistle Public House.

Planning and Listed Building Application for a change of use and alterations to create a 6 bedroom HMO.

Introduction

The property was formerly a public house and seems to have been known under two names, The Crown and Thistle and The Rose and Thistle.





According to the Harmer Street Conservation Appraisal the building known as The Terrace were built in the early nineteenth century and comprise a terrace of 5 buildings, four of which are three storeys and one is two storeys in height. The Appraisal says that The Terrace was established in 1791. This may refer to the street rather than this group of buildings. Originally

these buildings were built as houses by a local resident James Leigh Joynes as the first private venture housing in Gravesend. The appraisal mentions the group numbered 42 to 45 and The Terrace Tavern as a cohesive group of buildings and as being a neat row between street corners. The buildings are of smaller scale and not as detailed as the properties built in Harmer Street.

Interestingly looking at the Ordnance Survey maps shown in the Appraisal, there are buildings that form a terrace between East Terrace and Harmer Street shown on the map dated 1769 however the Appraisal says this group was built in the early 19th Century and the map showing building age information suggests the Terrace date back to between 1800 and 1840. Therefore, this terrace have been constructed on the site of earlier buildings.

Records online show the first landlord as having been Edward Sabery Colyer, Beer Retailer from 1859. The pub closed in April 2011 and was re-opened in October 2011 then was closed by October 2015. It has been closed and on the market since then. Initially the owners marketed the pub as a public house but they received no interest for this use. Whilst offers have come forward since then the interest hasn't led to any purchasers, all the interest has been for residential use.

As the old photograph above shows, at that time to either side of the pub there were shops with residential above. It's probable that the shop keepers lived over their shop and also that the pub landlord lived above the bar until the pub closed.

The building has been the subject of alterations in the past. The pre-application response lists applications from 1949 to 1988 for alterations for extensions to the rear of the building.

The original footprint of the building is likely to have been similar to the small cellar at the front which at some stage was extended to create a further room at the rear. The original I house probably comprised two rooms in depth on the ground floor each with a fireplace. This layout is reflected in the ground floor plan which shows where the rear wall was and how the building has been extensively altered with a large single storey flat roofed ground floor extension. The steel column that supports the upper floors about halfway back and the wall thicknesses and position of a thicker section of original rear wall indicating a probable original rear window opening.

This building has painted brickwork and painted render to the rear elevation and painted render to the front elevations. There are timber sash windows to the upper parts to the front with the timber public house frontage to the ground floor. The metal pub sign bracket remains to the front. Also to the front there are other metal brackets which held floor baskets, old wiring, spot lights to the bar frontage and security lights. To the rear at least one of the original sash windows has been replaced by a upvc window frame. Over the rear door to the garden there is a modern plastic rain canopy. The main roof is slate. Flat roofs are in felt.

The three terraced buildings to the left have painted weatherboarded side and rear elevations to the upper floors and to the rear of a modern extension to the property immediately to the left that is now a house. It's likely that the upper parts to this building would have been weatherboarded originally and has since been rendered.

The building now shows signs of deterioration externally and internally. To the front the ground floor bar window glazing is broken and boarded over, the door thresholds, window frames require repair and decoration. The garden is overgrown with brambles reflecting the years of being empty and neglected.

The Proposal

The proposal is to create a six bedroom HMO. In order to create six bedrooms, it is proposed that part of a modern extension to the building that is just to the rear of the original rear wall of the building, be demolished with a new wall installed so that a lightwell area is created so enabling a window to be installed into the rear wall of the building once again. By creating this light well two bedrooms can be created on the ground floor with a kitchen and lounge to the front on the ground floor. There is access created to the rear garden by these changes so the garden can be brought back into use. Two bedrooms are proposed using rooms that already existing and with limited alterations on each of the two upper floors.

There is very little left inside the building that is an original feature. All the skirting boards and architraves and doors are modern. It's clear that there has been many alterations over the years. The only details of worth are the pub shop front and the timber sash windows and may be the metal hanging sign bracket, but that looks to be a modern bracket and not an old wrought iron bracket.

Planning

A pre-application enquiry was submitted, PRE20230096 and a written response received dated 9th May which followed after a site visit by Miss Harrison and Mrs Hankin.

Three options were put forwards for the future use of the buildings, a 6 bedroom HMO option and proposals for changes to create two, 2 bedroom flats with different layouts. The HMO use and the other proposal being to create two bedroom flats, one on the ground floor and the other using the upper floors. To get the best layout, some alteration to enable a light well to be created is necessary. However, we stress that this alteration is to a relatively recent flat roofed extension and is not to the original part of the building. There is nothing of merit to the flat roofed extension either by way of it's design or materials which include a felt flat roof.

The pre-app response referred to the Harmer Street Conservation Area Appraisal in some detail. It also covered the need to preserve the heritage and that there is potential to protect and restore this building by it finding a new use. There was mention of commercial use being desirable or even being a requirement with reference to sections of the Conservation Appraisal which did say that the buildings were in commercial use with residential upper parts. However, since the Appraisal was published in 2009 the economic and social situation has changed considerably and now only the building on the left side is in commercial use and the ground floor of the former pub at the east end of The Terrace, The Terrace Tavern, operates as a convenience store.

On the other side of The Terrace there is a former shop not used as a dwelling. No 45 The Terrace is a house now and retains the shop front with the shop glass being partly obscured by a sandblasted finish. This property retains it's shop hanging sign and bracket as does The Tavern.

The pre-application reply covered the proposed HMO use with advice that a combined lounge and kitchen is seen as a high risk room and can't be used as an escape. The sketch layout plans submitted didn't show room dimensions so comments could not be made about the adequacy of the rooms in terms of size.

The proposed plans have been amended in order that the kitchen is a separate room. The room sizes are shown on the drawings and all bedrooms are single rooms and exceed 6.5 square metres required under Gravesham's residential layout guidance and are 7.5 or more

square metres required for a single person room under the Nationally Described Space Standards.

We have read through the Gravesham guidance for HMO Amenity and consider that the layout meets with these requirements.

The windows are arranged to the front and rear of the building and are existing other than the proposed windows to the area to become a light well. The toilet proposed will have a frosted window. Should it be considered that the window to bedroom 1 will be too close to the new toilet window, then we can install mechanical ventilation and not provide the toilet with a window.

Bedroom 1 is a ground floor room. Along the side boundaries there are 1.8 metre close boarded fences to both side. The end of the garden is defined by the side wall to the nearest building in Harmer Street which doesn't have any side windows overlooking the garden and property.

The upper parts of the building have been in residential use previously so there is no change by this proposal to outlook and privacy.

We note that Gravesham's Highway Officer doesn't raised a highway objection to residential uses here as the location is a town centre position and residents can therefore access all town centre amenities and public open spaces without requiring a car.

The applicant will pay the SAMMS payment required of £314.05 per bedroom.

The garden is overgrown and will be cleared of the bramble growth that has overtaken the garden and shrubs will be planted to make the garden more attractive and to also enhance bio-diversity. The shrubs proposed being culinary herbs like sage, thyme, borage, lavender, chives, dill, basil, oregano, rosemary, and mint which attract bees and butterflies, are easily managed and are useful plants in the kitchen and encourage social interaction between the residents.

An area of patio extending 3 metres into the garden is to be created by the rear door.

The property has been extensively marketed by Robinson Michael Jackson Estate Agents. The only interest there has been in the property is residential use enquiries. There hasn't been any commercial use enquiries and the property has been empty for over 7 years. Emails from the agent have been received and are submitted with this application to cover the period of marketing by the owner and by the agent.

The adjacent building is in residential use, a former shop opposite is in residential use. Another public house close by, The Call Boy has been granted planning permission to become a number of flats. The Call Boy was a former public house in a main road position in Harmer Street where there are existing ground floor business uses, however planning consent was granted to convert this building, including the ground floor to residential use with no obvious objection to this raised by the planning department.

We also comment that there are other public houses within a short distance. Heading south to Milton Road there is TJ's Public House. Along Royal Pier Road there is The Clarendon Hotel with a bar, further on into West Street, The Three Daws Public House and Rum Puncture. Within High Street and Queen Street there are other drinking and eating establishments selling alcohol.

With regards to commercial property use, there is no demand or market to open this property as a shop or for any other commercial use.

Looking at Rightmove Commercial there is office and shop space to rent on the market in High Street, New Road, East Crescent, The Terrace and numerous other commercial space opportunities.

As part of this proposed change of use, the applicant will remove the UPVC windows and install slimline double glazed timber sash windows to match the design of the existing sash windows and will overhaul and repair all timber windows, cills, doors, soffits. Will clean down and redecorate the exterior of the building. The interior will be cleaned and fitted out in accordance with the plans submitted.

In respect to noise, the proposal is for the internal surfaces of the walls and the upper surface of the floors to be upgraded with 12.5mm SoundBloc plasterboard, all plug sockets are to be surface mounted and all openings through walls for services will be sealed. 100mm of dense fibreglass quilt insulation to be installed into the floors between the joists by carefully lifting floor boards. Floor boards to be put back and any gaps infilled with new boards to match and overlaid with 4mm plywood. The floor deck outlined above should then be overlaid with an additional layer of 22mm thick layer of T&G chipboard with a bonded resilient foam layer, e.g. Reduc, Deckfon 26T, or any other similar product, to provide the required level of impact sound insulation; the timber floating floor system must also be fitted with the proper flanking strips around each room perimeter to minimise any flanking sound transmission into the common walls. Heavy rubber matting to be used as underlay and rooms carpeted other than bathrooms and the kitchen.

We note a planning condition is likely to be used to address noise matters.

With regards to relevant planning policies we consider these below.

Gravesham Core Strategy

CS01-Sustainable Development. Planning applications which accord to policies within the development plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and in the Core Strategy.

CS02-Scale and Distribution of Development. The strategy prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location with the promotion of regeneration and re-development and recycling of underused, derelict land and buildings. Bringing forwards a range of sites for housing and employment. This building is in the Town Centre Opportunity Area, Policy CS05. Underlying principles of the planning system are that sustainable development should be promoted, the town centre's competitiveness should be improved and it's local character promoted.

Paragraph 4.6.31 is The East of Town Centre and Riverside area (sub-area 3.4) is centred around Thames Riverside, Harmer Street and Milton Road. It is largely residential though there are pockets of land in employment use and some ground floor retail uses. There are some open spaces and a number of parks along the Riverside.

The Core Strategy mentions office use in various paragraphs and shows that the Core Strategy is dated. Although adopted in 2014 it's a document which is out of date in this respect as most larger office users have moved away and there is very little demand for offices in Gravesend. Some of the larger office buildings along Overcliffe are now turning to residential use.

CS14-Transport. This is a town centre location within a short walk of bus services that run along West Street and Harmer Street and serve much of Gravesham and beyond. Within walking distance of the train station and all the town centre leisure, retail and green spaces.

A resident doesn't require a car, however if the resident does own a car there are long stay car parks in the town centre and some limited residents parking area close by. A cycle store is provided for in the basement.

Housing types. The Council supports the provision of a mix of housing types and sizes to meet requirements of population of Gravesham. The greatest need was for one bedroom housing at the time of the adoption of the Core Strategy. The applicant owns other HMO's in the town centre and knows this market very well. There is a stronger demand now than before as the cost of living crisis has meant that rental costs for housing and fuel costs have risen.

CS19-Design and Development Principle. The wording is largely aimed at new build.

CS20-Heritage and the Historic Environment. #

The opening line says "our heritage is a valuable but fragile asset" These assets are non-renewable and the Borough should act as custodians meeting the needs of the current generation whilst enabling future generations to benefit from, enjoy and interpret this legacy.

This building is listed and forms part of a group of listed buildings in a Conservation Area. The building to the left is a house, however this still retains it's external appearance clearly having been a shop previously and this balance of retaining indications of the buildings previous use and adaption to now be used as a house work well. One of the key principles in planning for the future is sustainability. A building which can find an economic future use without requiring complete demolition is an important part of the sustainability concept. There is an opportunity to bring this building into use after years of having no viable use which will ensure it is maintained and the historic fabric remains. The application building has little internally of any historic interest, however outside it has the potential to be put back as a nice building reflecting it's previous history and use by retention of the pub frontage including the two entrance doors, hanging sign bracket and external materials.

We labour again on the point that this building has been empty since 2015 despite extensive marketing so it is now time for the planning authority to take a realistic look at viability and demand and to understand that the building will need to find a use soon to remain in a reasonable state of repair worth restoring.

As stated it has been marketed extensively as set out by Robinson Michael Jackson who advise that the only interest in the building is for residential use. They have conducted views and report that there is no commercial use interest in the property.

The attached email covers this marketing and interest.

So, the building will remain empty and vulnerable to damage and vandalism or worse to complete destruction if the wrong type of persons gain access to it. The front window has been damaged and boarded over as the photograph shows at the top of this report. It's highly likely that in time it will be broken into and more extensively damaged.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Sustainable development.

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This is further considered as:

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure
- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

In this case the proposal to create an HMO which will provide a place to live for six people in a sustainable position in the town centre with no requirement to externally alter the building other than improvements to it in line with it's listed status is supported by the NPPF and the presumption should be in favour of this application.

The NPPF says local planning authorities should:

Determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.

Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers , people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

Of relevance to this application, Gravesham Borough Council made a statement in March 2023 which shows that there is a shortfall in the 5 year housing land supply of 1785 homes for the period from 2022 to 2027. The council can deliver 2.9 years of the housing required over the next 5 years and falls very short of the required deliver. This therefore means that Gravesham must adopt a presumption in favour of sustainable development when considering planning applications and must apply a balancing exercise when considering applications to ensure the correct weight is applied to the shortfall in the 5 year housing supply requirement.

Heritage assets

Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure

the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

Design.

The only changes proposed to the exterior of this building are that the UPVC window profiles to the rear elevation are removed and replacement timber sash windows are installed. Ideally these will be fitted with slimline, 12mm double glazed window units between the window bars in order to upgrade this thermal element as there is the opportunity to do so. We expect that detailed drawings will need to be provided as a planning condition before the windows are replaced.

It's proposed to take down a small section of the later extension, part of the flat roofed rear extension and to install a timber framed window where we believe a rear window was located.

The exterior of the building will be put in repair and re-decorated. Internally, alterations to install timber stud partitions are proposed and the installation of noise insulation as mentioned is proposed. There are no internal features of merit.

Access

The access is via a step up at the front. To alter this by creating a ramped access would significantly alter the look of this listed building and would affect a large area of the pavement so we consider this is not feasible. Internally there are two flights of steps, the flight between the first and second floor is quite steep. In practice this may limit access by persons with physical disabilities.

The property is close to the town centre, close to the river front and to the public park area that includes the Esplanade and within walking distance of retail, leisure and social activities such as cafes, restaurants and pubs. There are bus stops along Harmer Street and West Street and the train station is about 10 minutes walk from where there are regular and fast rail services to London and to the Kent Coast and other towns in Kent. This is a very sustainable location.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that the local planning authority may have a desire to see the ground floor used commercially, however, the reality, as demonstrated by the results of extensive marketing is that there is not a demand for such use of this building. All the demand is as a residential property, however, this also has to be viable in view of the works required this proposal will bring an historic building into repair. Also, even if a commercial use could be identified, the upper parts would only find use as a residential property and so there would have to be sound proofing of internal walls between rooms and between the used on the different floors in that event.

We trust that the decision process will carefully assess all the factors, the principle in favour of approving sustainable development, the requirement to weight up sustainable residential development against any other negative aspect of this proposed use and proposed alterations to the building due to their not being a 5 year housing supply, the benefits of the building being in use and not empty through yet another autumn and winter. By the time the decision is made in in July there will be a month and a bit until the meteorological autumn.

END