Conservation Consultation

Proposal:		**Location:**
Change of use and conversion of public house to residential dwelling		Crown and Cushion, Great Gransden.
DC Case Officer:	**Conservation Officer:**	**Application Ref. No:**
Hannah Hodges	Nick Armour	25/00078/FUL & 25/00079/LBC

Applications 25/00078/FUL and 25/00079/LBC seek Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for the conversion of the Crown and Cushion Public House into a residential dwelling. The site is located within the Great Gransden Conservation Area and is a Grade II listed building.

Listing Description:

Originally a C17 three unit plan, timber framed and plastered farmhouse and beer house. One storey and attic with thatched roof. Two storey wing to south, mid C19, with slate roof and roughcast render to brick walls. End stack to east and late C17 red brick ridge stack. West elevation has three first floor, and two ground floor modern casement windows with glazing bars. RCHM (Hunts) mon.(16) p122.

History

A search through historic directories indicates that in 1898 the building was known as The Crown Public House and was run by Albert Edward Mumford. Another entry records a Frederick Mumford as boot maker and shopkeeper. The 1887 six inch OS Map does not identify the building as being a public house but it is marked as such on the 1902 OS Map. At this time the main building has the same footprint as now but what is now the carpark was then a courtyard surrounded by outbuildings. The outbuilding currently used as a garage is shown on the early OS Maps and is likely to be protected within the curtilage of the listed building.

Significance

The principal east-west range is timber framed and dates to the 17th Century. It is built on a typical three-bay plan with the main entrance located opposite the chimneystack. Originally single storey in height, it has an inserted floor to create attic rooms. The construction of a two-storey brick extension to the south of the main range led to further alterations. The southern side of the timber frame was built up to allow first floor access to the extension and to create of an internal corridor. Consequently, the roof is asymmetrical with a shallower pitch to the southern roof slope than that to the north. It appears that the cellar and eastern bay of the original building were built or rebuilt in brick in the 19th Century although there may still be residual timber framing hidden behind modern fabric.

At ground floor level the framing has been removed to allow access into the brick extension. The timbers appear to have been re-used to create an internal room that incorporates a small extension on the north elevation. This created a small discrete room with access to the street frontage. It is likely that activity within this room required security as the entrance framing retains hasps for a draw bar. It may have been used for storing and selling beer or other goods, discrete from the function of the rest of the building.

There are relatively few 20th Century alterations. The bar and fittings are modern, covering up an assumed inglenook fireplace and there is a small single storey modern extension on the southern elevation housing the toilets.

Proposed alterations

A change of use is proposed to enable the building to be converted into a family home. The proposed alterations to the listed building to enable this change are:

a) removal of the bar, commercial kitchen, boiler and toilets.
b) reinstatement of the assumed fireplace in the west side of the main stack.
c) changing the east wall of the toilet extension and the re-arrangement of the internal space to create a utility room.
d) creation of a master bathroom in Bedroom 2 and removal of adjacent toilet.

Listed Building

The proposed alterations would impact modern fabric with no special architectural or historic interest. The historic evolution of the building would be retained. There would be slight loss of significance through moving the modern extension wall to change the historic entrance to the building. There would be slight enhancement to the significance of the building by opening up the assumed fireplace in the main stack. No alterations to the exterior of the building are proposed and therefore there would be no impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area under these applications.

Change of use

Government guidance on ‘Optimum Viable use’

If there is a range of alternative economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most economically viable one. Nor need it be the original use. However, if from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between alternative economically viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner, subject of course to obtaining any necessary consents.

The existing use is commercial and the building was used as a public house until 2020. The building is of a modest size. Due to its protected status there would be limited options to extend the building to increase its commercial footprint without harming the significance of the heritage asset. Extension of the building to increase domestic space is also likely to be limited. However, in the longer term it is likely that a residential use can be better accommodated within the existing capacity of the building.

Law and Policy

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 section s66 require the determining authority to have special regard to the preservation of the special architectural and historic interest of a listed building and its setting.

Under the NPPF considerable weight and importance should be given to the avoidance of harm to the significance of heritage assets. This is irrespective of whether the harm is considered likely to be substantial or less than substantial (NPPF paragraph 212). The presumption against the avoidance of harm is a statutory one, it is not irrefutable but can only be outweighed if there are material benefits powerful enough to do so (NPPF paragraph 215).

Discussion

The proposed alterations and change of use are unlikely to harm the architectural significance of the listed building. There would be some loss of historic significance through the removal of the bar and change of use to residential, however, interpretation of the listed building is not solely reliant on its continued commercial use. If the negative aspects of the proposals are considered there would be less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset. Under NPPF Paragraph 215 this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. A commercial use may be viable where there is no pressure to make significant internal alterations or to extend the building. A residential use is likely to be accommodated within the existing capacity of the building.

Notwithstanding other policy considerations if these applications are approved the following condition is recommended:

Notwithstanding the submitted drawings, prior to the installation of the kitchen no works shall be undertaken until:

1) the condition of the chimney stack and viability of re-opening the fireplace have been demonstrated according to a scheme of investigative works to be submitted to and confirmed in writing by the LPA.

2) plans illustrating the arrangement of the kitchen and any alteration required to install new fabric shall be submitted to and confirmed in writing by the LPA.

Summary: No Objection subject to Condition

Signed Nick Armour Date 10/03/2025 Signed……Date……..