

Shepway Borough Council

Conservation Consultancy Advice:

177	Case ref. no:	Y17/0059/SH
Property Address:		Princess Royal Public House, 28 South Street, Folkestone
Proposals:		Demolition of the Princess Royal Public House
Application Type		Planning Permission (Demolition)
Agent:		Martello Consultants
General Comments Operative Conditions?		
Listing / C/A?		Conservation Area, Heritage Asset
Date Consult Received:		24/01/2017
Date Comments Sent:		07.02.2017

Comments:

General Description:

South Street is located on the flat ground between the promontory of *The Bayle* and the Harbour. Here, *South Street* runs North-South between the lower end of the *Old High Street* to where it joins *Harbour Street* at the foot of *The Parade Steps* leading up to *The Parade* and *The Bayle*. Most of *South Street* is just a broad pavement area separated from *Harbour Street* by a raised planter but at the South end there is an isolated group of buildings, all pubs – *The True Briton*, *Gillespie's* and opposite, on the West side of the remnant *South Street*, *The Princess Royal* (which has been closed since 2010). *The Parade Steps* (only recently reopened following a refurbishment) starts to the side of the pub, returns along the back of it rising all the time, before following a step zig zag route up the hill to *The Parade* on a high point overlooking *The Harbour*.

Historic Building Description and Significance:

Folkestone Old Town is of tremendous historic significance. *The Bayle*, set up on a high defensive place overlooking the town and the harbour (the site of the castle and the parish church), together with *The Old High Street* winding down the hill to *The Stade* – The old harbour, where the *Pent Stream* (now culverted) discharges into the sea, was the historic core of the settlement. Old photos show a series of picturesque streetscapes on both sides of the railway viaduct that leads down to the harbour, of which only *The Old High Street* remains, the rest having been cleared in the late 1930s and 50's

Historic maps show the area of flat land at the lower end of *The Old High Street*, between there and the harbour, laid out as a maze of streets: *Harbour Street* – a continuation of *Tontine Street*, was a broad street leading down to *The Stade*, alongside the inner harbour basin. To the East, other streets, *Beach Street* and

Seagate Street led off towards the harbour and through to the fish market area with *Seagate Street* leading back up the hill. *South Street* was a narrower street, sandwiched in to the rear of *Harbour Street*, right up against the hillside promontory of *The Bayle*, with the *Parade Steps* leading up the hill from the lower end of the street next to *The Princess Royal* as they still do.

This network of streets formed a seamless connection between the bottom end of *The Old High Street*, the Harbour and the Fishmarket area beyond the railway arches.

In the mid c20th, in my opinion, something truly terrible happened to this area, with the wholesale demolition of all the streets beyond the bottom end of *The Old High Street* through to the viaduct and to the East of it within the old fishing quarter.

It is not clear, from the limited time available for research, whether this happened as a result of war time damage, slum clearance, or to improve the route to the harbour (which was until the 1970s a major gateway to the continent), or possibly for all of the above reasons. Nevertheless, the whole townscape was cleared away leaving a wasteland of open ground bisected by engineered highway alignments, car parking, decorative planting areas and other *Space Left Over After Planning*.

The Old High Street provides a reminder of the lost townscapes of the area and the three public house buildings facing each other across the South end of *South Street*, are a poignant reminder of the former enclosed nature of *South Street* which otherwise has been relegated to a rather pointless wide pedestrian area, leading from *The Old High Street* to - nowhere in particular, and defined only by a large raised planter separating it from a realigned *Harbour Street*.

The Gillespie's building (nos28/30 *Harbour Street*) and *The Princess Royal* on the West side, both appear to be Victorian. whereas the *True Briton*, (to the North of *Gillespies*), comprises two buildings of uncertain age, possibly early c19th but heavily remodelled with applied weatherboarding and a pantile roof. *The Princess Royal* is a three storey building – stuccoed with a rusticated ground storey and with a hipped slated roof with bracketed eaves in the Italianate style popular in mid-19th Century Folkestone. The rear part is a later extension in the same style – two stories – and here *The Parade Steps* start their zig zag route climbing the hillside up to *The Bayle*. These broad steps start rising alongside the pub, returning back to an enclosed triangular courtyard landing before climbing steeply up the hillside.

Development Proposals:

The proposal is to completely demolish the building which has been vacant since 2010 and is becoming derelict.

The application is accompanied with a surveyors report (Harding Bond – James Martin Surveyor) outlining areas of demolition – holes in roof, decayed floors, etc.

There is also a demolition sequence plan and risk assessment (Harding Bond), a demolition method statement (Martello) but almost no information on the subsequent use of the site, nor any detail of remedial treatment other than that it will be “left flat with a tarmac temporary surface pending future redevelopment” (Martello Design and Access Statement).

Relevant Documents:

Demolition Method Statement (Martello)
Design and Access Statement (Martello)
Existing Location and Site Plan (Martello 2504/01)
Proposed Demolition Plan (Martello 2504/02)
Heritage Statement (Martello)
Outline Demolition Plan (Harding Bond)

Additional Information:

Historic Maps 1871, 1897, 1907, 1929, 2016 (KCC HER)

Streetview photos (Google)

Aerial photos (Bing)

Historic Photos of the surrounding area and The Old High Street (mostly Warren Press)

Comments:

This is a disastrous proposal, in my opinion! *The Princess Royal* and *Gillespie's* opposite, together form a key townscape grouping at the foot of *The Parade Steps*, forming a prominent townscape feature close by the west side of the Harbour basin of the particular importance in views further west along *Harbour Street* and in views North from the side of the harbour and *the Burstin Hotel*. They form part of the setting of the promontory of *The Bayle* and the buildings in *The Parade* that are positioned up there, high above the town.

At a more local level, *The Princess Royal* and *Gillespie's* opposite, together define the remnant of *South Street* which once extended to the north, an important remnant of the historic townscape described in the report above. In addition, *The Princess Royal* is a building of considerable architectural merit in its own right, an attractive composition in that white painted Italianate style that is so much part of the character of Folkestone. In addition, the building is intimately connected to *The Parade Steps* that start their climb beside the building and continue to climb to the rear of it. Here there is a large triangular landing courtyard which is defined on its East side by the pub building and the loss of enclosure caused by the demolition of the building would be very harmful to the townscape and the setting of the steps, which have only recently been restored.

The Harding Bond report goes into some detail as to the derelict state of the building, describing holes in roofs, failed flat roof areas and the results of water penetration over an extended period – failed floors, decayed joinery, etc. However, the report fails to have identified any fundamental structural failure of the sort that would render any sort of renovation project impractical and generally only describes the sort of failure that has resulted from an extended period of neglect and failure to address the ingress of water into the building.

This is a classic example of where the building has been left to rot by both past and current owners who have not displayed any commitment to the upkeep of the building, nor to keep it wind and water tight. This is a typical example of where a building is allowed to deteriorate and its resultant condition is then used as an excuse to demolish the building for redevelopment.

The Princess Royal, although unlisted, is nevertheless a significant building which contributes in no uncertain way to the setting of the townscape of this part of the Conservation Area. It could be defined as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. The demolition of the building would harm the townscape character of this part of the Conservation Area and in the absence of any proposals for a replacement building, or a timescale for its development, it is impossible to promote an argument that the demolition would preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area – the statutory test.

It is for this reason that Heritage England normally ask for a clause that any approved demolition scheme should not go ahead until contracts are let for the erection of the replacement building – a standard planning clause.

In any event, I believe it is required that Heritage England be notified of any proposal for demolition in a Conservation Area and I am sure their position would also be to object to this proposal.

In my view this is an unacceptable proposal for demolition, harmful to the Conservation Area and the

proposal is unsupported by information that is sufficient to justify the demolition, nor are there any adequate proposals shown for the post-demolition treatment of the site, the treatment of retaining walls or abutments to The Parade Steps, and there are no proposals suggested for the design of the replacement building, nor any timescale indicated for the redevelopment following demolition.

The application for demolition represents a proposal to demolish an unlisted Heritage Asset within the Conservation Area and the NNPF have clauses to cover this situation:

130. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

135. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset

136. Local planning authorities should not permit loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred

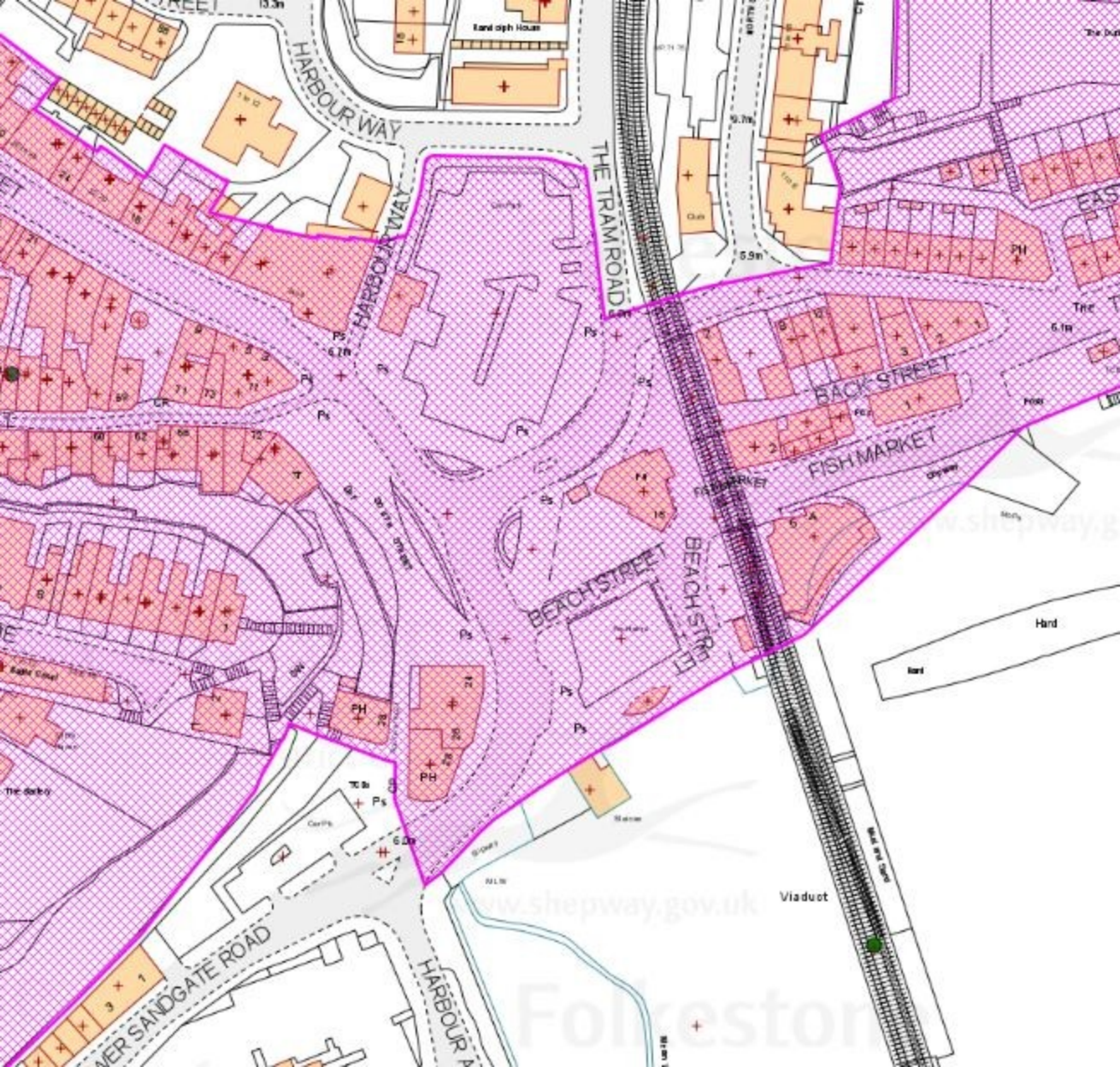
138. Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

I am not sure whether Shepway District Council has any available grant schemes to assist with repair to the building but it might be worth an approach to Heritage England to see if they could assist with any grant aid.

Recommendations:

1. Notify Heritage England and the SPAB of the proposal to demolish (if not already done)
2. Inform the applicant that the Local Authority is minded to refuse the application
3. Consider whether an *Amenity Notice under Section 215 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act* or a *Nuisance Order under Section 29 of the Local Government (miscellaneous provisions) Act* is an appropriate action to take against the owner
4. It might be that a meeting with the applicants would be a helpful way of moving this forward so as to get the proposals for demolition abandoned and to agree an alternative strategy for the development of the building by conserving it





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Folkestone



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