

HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR THE CLIFTON HOTEL, 1-6 CLIFTON GARDENS, CT20 2EB

INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Statement supports an application for conservation area consent for works to the Clifton Hotel, Folkestone. The works to which the application relates comprise renewal of the existing timber windows in Heritage PVCu to match the design and pattern of the existing fenestration. The property is not listed but is within The Leas & Bayle Conservation Area of Folkestone which includes areas of the harbor, the town centre, and The Leas

SITE LOCATION

The development site is within the Folkestone Leas & Bayle conservation area. Known as the 'Best Western Clifton Hotel', the hotel is a traditional 3 Star Victorian hotel dating back to 1864, situated in the centre of the Leas and offering spectacular views of the English Channel. The hotel boasts 80 bedrooms all with sea views, looking across the English Channel.

THE PROPOSED WORKS.

The proposed works are for the renewal of the existing obsolete and mismatched timber windows to PVCu heritage windows in a similar design and fenestration pattern. The new windows are heritage grade suitable for use in a conservation area and have a timber grain appearance with no sheen.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY AND SETTING.

Folkestone developed from its historic core of The Old High Street, Bayle, Church Street area of the town centre, westward from the mid-19th century, mostly due to the development of the railway and the port. This westward development comprised large houses - terraced, semi-detached, and occasionally detached - along The Leas and either side of Sandgate Road, demonstrating Folkestone growing status as a holiday destination for the affluent. These large homes for the wealthy are characterised by an urbane stucco architecture that fitted the national trend of similar development in other seaside towns, such as Brighton and Hastings.

Clifton Gardens and Langhorne Gardens were constructed as part of this stage of development. The parallel roads comprise large, terraced houses perpendicular to The Leas linking Sandgate Road to The Leas. Properties along Clifton Gardens are not listed and are characterised by several large hotels or blocks of flats typically constructed by knocking several terraced houses together. Whilst not as significant as the houses along Sandgate Road, Trinity Crescent, and Clifton Crescent they nonetheless contribute to the understanding of the development of Folkestone from a fishing port to its 19th Century statement destination for holidays by the sea, and its gradual decline in the twentieth century.

By the mid twentieth Century the westward expansion closest to the town centre was demolished to make way for the growing demand for town centre shopping. The population and demographics changed significantly, and the once grand houses were adapted and refurbished to accommodate the growing middle- and working-class families. Budget hotels sprang up to cater for the less affluent holiday makers.

Toward the end of the twentieth century Folkestone has begun to reinvent itself as a cultural and arts centre. Whilst the holiday market still makes up a significant part of the local economy the nineteenth century pastiche classical architecture also creates a tourist attraction. In recognition of this and the contribution to public health and wellbeing the Folkestone Leas & Bayle conservation area contains a high density of Grade II listed buildings.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASSET

The heritage asset is located along Clifton Gardens which is characterised by large, four/five storey stucco terraced houses dating from the second half of the 19th century most of which have been converted into flats and hotels. 1-6 Clifton Gardens is in a prominent position located at the end of Clifton Gardens and perched on a cliff overlooking the English Channel and visible from the Leas and Clifton Gardens. This Victorian three-star hotel has a varied history and was once a series of independent terraced houses subsequently converted into one hotel. The Clifton Hotel dates to 1864 but the houses were built much earlier and are visible in the below 1878 historic map of Folkestone.



1878 Historic map of Folkestone

1-6 Clifton Gardens is a five-storey building with the fifth storey in the mansard style roof. The property has a stucco finish with a variety of pastiche classical decorative features such as cornice and modillion, pediments, columns, stone balcony supports, and wrought metalwork. The original windows are timber double hung sliding sashes, some featuring curved heads and some featuring straight heads. Dormers in the mansard roof are of stone and timber construction with lead cheeks and roofs.

1-6 Clifton Gardens is a similar design to other properties in the road with similar coloured stucco in a variation of cream or similar colour and with masonry features picked out in white. Existing windows are painted white with white masonry surrounds. Timber to dormer windows is painted white. Cast iron rainwater goods, downpipes and hopper heads are traditionally either white or painted to match the masonry surfaces behind. Black is the traditional colour for external metalwork.

Similar properties along Clifton Gardens and Langhorne Gardens have rainwater goods in a variety of materials and colours. Several of the large houses and hotels along have changed their windows to PVCu in a variety of designs.

Whilst there may be a trend to declare that these changes have materially detracted from the historical significance of the townscape character this has not proven to be the case. The sense of place and community, and the contribution to public health and wellbeing has not been undermined by these changes and the houses and hotels can be seen as a catalyst for economic and social regeneration in this area.

The Clifton hotel has a constant flow of visitors from all over the UK and its present owners have spent significant sums in refurbishing the public interior spaces. The hotel now provides modern public spaces, restaurants, and bars that draw in the local community and visitors alike.

However, the rooms require a significant refurbishment to bring them to a standard demanded by discerning holiday makes. All room are required to be air-conditioned, and bathrooms must be modern in appearance and function. Windows play a key role in the comfort and energy use of the building.

The existing timber windows are over 100-year-old and have reached the end of their economic life. The exposed location of the hotel means the windows face the devastating weathering effect from the sea air. Several of the windows have had to be replaced and some are pieced together resulting in draughty and ill-fitting sashes.

THE IMPACT ON THE ASSET.

The proposed window replacement is modest in scale and is a like-for-like replacement to the existing windows. The proposed material is PVCu which offers maintenance free high performance at a reasonable cost.

The proposed windows are complementary to the existing detailing on the windows. It is accepted that the existing timber mid-rails and sashes may have a slimmer sightline. However, the existing windows are single glazed, and double-glazed timber window profiles will be similar in profile to the proposed PVCu window due to the additional strength required to carry the double-glazed unit. It is noted that painted timber sashes are part of the special characteristic of the area, and the proposed windows have sought to protect this by using a slimline heritage quality PVCu sash windows.

The proposed changes to the windows will not impact the significance of the heritage assets either through a change to the setting, or the loss or concealment of key features or historic fabric. Key views to and from the building remain unchanged, and

there is no impact on the relationships between other buildings along Clifton Gardens which have a multitude of different styles and materials. There will be no loss of archaeological or historic evidence and the character of the townscape will be enhanced by these changes by providing a community benefit by significantly improving the energy efficient of an heritage asset, ensuring its continued use.

PRESERVE, ENHANCE AND MITIGATE

By changing the windows, the hotel owners are ensuring that the hotel can provide high quality, reasonably priced accommodation through an economically viable business plan. The long-term future of the hotel will be guaranteed and this in turn will ensure the heritage asset will be preserved for future generations as well as providing a much used and valued community asset.

The renewal in PVCu will provide benefit to the community by making a significant contribution towards community Carbon Zero goals. This would not be possible with the retention of the existing timber windows.

To mitigate the effect of the proposed change to the historic asset the proposed windows use heritage standard PVCu windows from a national supplier. Many of the buildings in the conservation area have windows that do not reflect the heritage of the original area. By replacing the windows with a cohesive heritage PVCu the building will retain the heritage appearance and complement and enhance the social, communal, and economic value of the heritage asset.

We accept that the proposed change to the fenestration may be construed by some as detracting from the heritage asset however the benefit to the community, the public, and to the town outweighs that harm. The changes will ensure that visitors to Folkestone will have high quality affordable accommodation in a prime location for many years.