

'Character will be changed'

Among the issues Mrs Olliver raised were concerns over the aesthetics of the work including the access ramp at the side of the building, trenches to be dug in front of the building would she said would look "incongruous to the rest of the facade".

She added: "Allowing the continued development of short-term holiday-let bedsits to be carved out of every nook and cranny of this building is entirely inappropriate.

"These developments are completely out of character with the spacious residential flats of which the building is for the most part comprised.

"If allowed to continue, this type of development will ultimately change the character of the building, taking it far away from historic 'Gentlemen's Apartments' for which The Grand was originally conceived."

Mr Richardson said: "It was originally built as a hotel. We were keen to hear all sides of the argument and responsibly took the decision to remove sections of the planned development in order to respect the opinions of our neighbours.

"The biggest one was the driveway at the west and a wall around the outside.

"She's never ever made her complaints known to us."



The Grand, where work will start as soon as possible, and right, Michael Stainer and Robert Richardson with Cllr Russell Tillson

Picture: Wayne McCabe FM3487833

Grand gets conversion go-ahead

by **Matt Leclere**

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Several empty rooms at The Grand hotel will be converted into luxury suites after planning permission was granted by Shepway District Council last week.

It is a major breakthrough for the business on The Leas in Folkestone following a battle lasting almost three years to gain permission to convert the seven

ground-floor apartments which are set to fetch in excess of £160 per night.

The overall permission consists of two applications; a change of use and conversion application and listed building consent for the Edwardian Grade II listed building.

The plans were unanimously approved (with one abstention on the change of use application) by the 13 district councillors who sit on the development control committee.

But the application as not without controversy as residents of The Grand opposed the development - which is set to provide around 10 jobs and includes landscaping work on the west side of the building facing The Metropole across the road.

In total 12 objections were raised to the committee.

Jo Olliver, chairman of the Association of Residents of The Grand (AORG), spoke against the application on behalf of fellow residents who lease apartments

from the owners of the building freehold, Hallam Estates Ltd.

General manager of The Grand Robert Richardson said work on the £800,000 project will begin with the conversion of the former servant quarters and boiler rooms which are said to be in a poor state of repair as soon as possible.

He added: "This not only maintains a valuable and Grade II listed Edwardian building for the people of Folkestone but is exactly the sort of development

that Folkestone needs.

The increase of commercial activity will generate new jobs for Folkestone people through The Grand's already award-winning employment and training scheme and drive more money into our local economy."

Director of Hallam Estates Michael Stainer said: "Folkestone has had a great boost to its tourism attractions this year, and it is satisfying the council is supporting the rejuvenation of The Grand."