

Press Release:

A major development at The Grand in Folkestone will preserve the future of this vast and historic building.

On Tuesday 28th October 2014 and following on from nearly three years of negotiations between Shepway District Council, Hallam Estates (proprietors of The Grand) and English Heritage a request for planning permission and a listed building application to provide a further seven unique suites at The Grand and to a Visit England Four Star standard has been approved via Shepway District Council's Development Control Committee.

The scope of works whilst preserving the heritage of one of the south coast's finest landmarks will also involve a major landscaping operation on the west side (see attached architects impression provided by Charles Bain Smith of Kent based Cyma architects) of the property.

The project will preserve the ground level of the west elevation of the grade two listed property via the creation of the following seven suites: (i) Glastonbury, (ii) Gladstone, (iii) Guildford, (iv) Gainsborough, (v) Godwyn, (vi) Gloucester and (vii) Grimstone and has been welcomed by District Councillors with **Cllr. Russell Tillson Deputy Leader of Shepway District Council** saying:

"I am so delighted and relieved that The Grand has finally been granted planning permission by Shepway District Council. The plans for expansion are ambitious and longstanding and once brought to fruition will reinforce the reputation of The Grand as the leading provider of accommodation and fine dining in Folkestone. The impact on employment and tourism will increase still further the enviable record of The Grand. Full marks to Robert Richardson the General Manager"

Cllr. Peter Simmons who proposed the development be approved commended the jobs creation factor of the project whilst speaking at the DCC meeting.

Under the management of Robert Richardson The Grand has become a large scale and award winning employer with four award nominations and wins from the Department For Work & Pensions for jobs creation in the last 18 months alone with the most recent being provided by Cabinet Minister for Employment Esther McVey earlier this year.

Robert Richardson had to say:

"This sort of development not only maintains a valuable and Grade Two listed Edwardian building for the people of Folkestone but is exactly the sort of development that Folkestone needs as aside from it being a £800,000.00 project 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. Cllr. David Monk, Cllr. Russell Tillson and Shepway District Council should be commended for their forward thinking attitude.

This project also bodes well for putting other sections of The Grand back in to use which will also mean further job creation in Folkestone and future development of this fine building."

Charles Bain Smith principal of CYMA architects represented The Grand throughout the discussions for the project and represented the application in front of Development Control offered the following:

"We are lucky to have older iconic buildings like The Grand still in Shepway. They still serve a purpose today, if they can be adapted sensitively. Even Yoko Ono has a piece (of art) installed at The Grand. This is the largest of Folkestone's late Victorian hotels still open to the public. It is a highly important part of our local cultural heritage. It makes no sense to have parts of it empty. Common sense has mercifully prevailed and I'm grateful for the hard and difficult work done by Shepway's planning department and the sensible decision made by the committee."

The final word goes to **Michael Stainer** Director of the company owning The Grand:

“Folkestone has had a great boost to its tourism attractions this year, and it is satisfying that among its many initiatives the council is supporting the rejuvenation of The Grand which has become one of the major employers in the district. And for me it is particularly gratifying to see The Grand blossoming after more than forty years of endeavour.”

Twelve representations against this development were received by Shepway District Council (at no point over the last three years were any objections to the development received by the management of The Grand) and the owners of The Grand 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 plans in their final form are now accepted and works will be scheduled for the earliest opportunity. The precedents set out in this process have been essential in safeguarding the future of this vast and historic landmark and will allow The Grand to truly reach its potential over the next few years.

Please contact Robert Richardson, General Manager of The Grand for further details in writing at: The Grand, The Leas, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2XL or by email: rr@grand-uk.com

Words: Robert Richardson
Thursday 30th October 2014