

## Mr G J R and Mrs K F Swindells

**rdc**  
Robert Doughty  
Consultancy

Planning, Design and Access Statement  
Proposed Change of Use of The Mermaid Inn to Five  
Apartments, the Erection of a Terrace of Three,  
Two Storey Dwellings, One, Single Storey Dwelling  
and Associated Demolition and Alteration to  
Existing Access off Stockhouse Lane.  
The Mermaid Inn, 2 Gosberton Road, Surfleet,  
Lincolnshire PE11 4AB.

Document Reference: 1447-1 DAS V1 LMS

Date: October 2022

32 High Street  
Helpringham  
Sleaford  
NG34 0RA

Tel: 01529 421646  
Fax: 01529 421358  
Email: [admin@rdc-landplan.co.uk](mailto:admin@rdc-landplan.co.uk)  
Web: [www.rdc-landplan.co.uk](http://www.rdc-landplan.co.uk)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS.....	2
3. COMMERCIAL HISTORY OF THE MERMAID .....	6
4. DESIGN .....	9
5. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT .....	14
6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	15
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	16

### Appendix

Appendix A – Comments on Design

Appendix B – Comments on Statement of Heritage Significance

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. We have been instructed by Mr G J R Swindells and Mrs K F Swindells, owners of the Mermaid Inn, Surfleet to submit a Full Planning Application and Listed Building Consent for the change of use of the Mermaid Inn to create 2 x 1 bed apartment and 1 x 2 bed apartments at ground floor and 2 x 2 bed apartments at first floor. In addition, a detached 2 bed dwelling will be erected on the Stockhouse Lane frontage, and a terrace of 3 X 3 bed detached dwellings will be developed on the existing Inn car park and beer garden overlooking the River Glen.
- 1.2. This amended document has been produced following the Listing of the Mermaid Inn during the consideration of the current planning application. The application is accompanied by all the necessary drawings showing the changes to the proposal together with a detailed Assessment of Significance and a Heritage Impact Assessment which considers the impact of the proposals on the recently Listed building. The Statement of Significance has been the subject of informal approval by the local planning authority.
- 1.3. The revised proposals have been the subject of positive detailed discussions with the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.4. This document has also been updated to include the information supplied following the submission of the planning application, in response to questions from the case officer.

## **2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1. The Mermaid Inn is a two-storey period property (recently Listed as Grade II) with replacement wooden sash windows, red brick and white painted brick to the main facades with a mix of slate and concrete pantiles to the roofs. The Inn occupies a prominent position close to the road bridge across the River Glen at the junction of Gosberton Road and Stockhouse Lane in the middle of Surfleet. The Inn occupies the north-eastern corner of the application site on the junction of Stockhouse Lane and Gosberton Road. To the south of the principal building there is the River Glen and the main car park together with a riverside beer garden with a permanent outside bar and seating. There is a small ancillary single storey building within the main body of the site and another single storey building on the Stockhouse Lane frontage. A detailed description of the history of the site and buildings can be found in the Statement of Heritage Significance produced by Liz Mayle BA(Hons) MA (Dist) IHBC Historic Buildings Consultant.
- 2.2. Access into the site is from Gosberton Road with the exit onto Stockhouse Lane. This one-way system was operated by the applicants when the Inn was trading due to the poor visibility onto Gosberton Road.
- 2.3. The general character of the area to the west of the application site is predominantly residential with the iron road bridge (1884) over the River Glen dominating the views out of the site to the south-east.
- 2.4. Alongside the River Glen there is a floating landing stage/mooring and a brick revetment wall with ornamental coping and railings plus archway down to the staging which characterises the riverside views. All this riverside architecture will remain. The land levels within the site fall approximately 900mm from east to west. There are no trees on site and two short sections of deciduous hedges lie adjacent to the single storey store in the roughly the middle of the site.
- 2.5. A selection of photos below highlights the points above.



View of the eastern elevation taken from Surfleet Road



View from the bridge across the River Glen to the beer garden and car park



View from the road bridge across the beer garden and car park towards development fronting onto Stockhouse Lane.



View from the existing access (to be closed as part of the proposal) on Gosberton Road into the car park with the Inn on the right-hand side.



View from Stockhouse Lane with the building on the right-hand side which is to be demolished (the defibrillator will be relocated following discussion with LIVES)



Looking north along Gosberton Road at the junction with Station Road with the application site to the left of the picture on the Stockhouse Lane junction and the church of St Laurence to the right.

### **3. COMMERCIAL HISTORY OF THE MERMAID**

- 3.1. Our client purchased the property in 2010 when it was largely derelict and invested over £200,000 into the overall refurbishment and improvement both inside and out. There are 6 double rooms, an office and sitting room on the first floor with restaurant and kitchen facilities on the ground floor.
- 3.2. The Mermaid Inn has, like all rural pubs, businesses and restaurants, seen a lower footfall in the last 10 years since the introduction of the smoking ban in 2007, the increased sales of alcohol from supermarkets at cheap prices and vigorous hikes in business rates that are set for 10-year periods. The ramifications of the COVID pandemic saw the business close and all the staff found new jobs in less demanding roles outside the hospitality industry. The Mermaid Inn is a limited company, and the accounts are available for scrutiny. We have submitted the accounts for the last 4 years of trading which indicate that the Mermaid was essentially being run at a loss and was subsidised by the owners through their farming business. Current energy price rises would compound the expenses that would need to be added to the overall cost of keeping the business operating.
- 3.3. The huge beer garden, which although beautiful, costs £150 a week on average to maintain and yet it was used on average for only 45-50 days a year due to British weather. Since 2014, the Inn could no longer hold functions in marquees as the Council served a noise abatement order which it has confirmed will not be lifted due to constant complaints from adjacent neighbours about noise from music and people chatting and laughing too loudly.
- 3.4. The Mermaid has always been run as a restaurant and Bed & Breakfast, there has never been the clientele around to justify a reliance on wet sales as that was provided by the nearby Crown Inn. During the week, the restaurant doors were always shut by 10pm and 11pm on Friday and Saturday and 3pm on a Sunday.
- 3.5. Following the closure of the Mermaid, the Crown Inn, the Riverside Hotel and the Fraiser Room will remain to serve the people of Surfleet, which, with recent developments is approximately 350 households.



- 3.6. In June 2020 the business was put up for sale with Everard Cole as “offers around £700K” and so far, there has only been interest from two people wishing to buy the site, with the highest tentative verbal offer made being £500K, which is well below the asking price and which was never made in writing and never followed up by the interested parties. There was one written offer to rent the Mermaid, but this was rejected because as with all rental properties, no matter how many clauses are in the agreement, the property would end up needing a complete overhaul after the tenancy finished. The sales particulars did not offer renting as an option.
- 3.7. The property remains on the market and continues to attract costs and the prolonged planning/Listing process has done nothing to alleviate this.
- 3.8. The owners therefore took the decision to seek the change of use of the Inn to residential and the redevelopment of the grounds to create 4 new dwellings, there being no viable alternative. Recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order have also seen steps taken to make it easier to change the use of buildings such as restaurants into residential use.
- 3.9. Policy 32 of the local plan identifies loosely (Pubs and restaurants are not specifically listed) that “community facilities” (there is a list of such facilities which doesn’t include pubs and restaurants) should not be lost unless it is “surplus to requirements **or** not economically viable **or** unfit for purpose”. Consequently, a proposal does not need to meet all of the requirements, just one.
- 3.10. The Mermaid has been valued and marketed by an estate agent which deals in such commercial properties and there have been no written or reasonable offers while the property has been on the market since March 2020.
- 3.11. There are a number of existing ‘community facilities’ (the Crown Inn, The Riverside Hotel and the Fraiser Room) within the village which remain to service the requirements of the local population and in this respect, even with the closure of the Mermaid, the village is well served by the existing facilities.

- 
- 3.12. It is therefore quite reasonable to conclude that the Mermaid is “surplus to requirements” as set out in local plan Policy 32.
- 3.13. In addition to the above, we have demonstrated that the continued operation of the Mermaid was not “economically viable” and were it not for the fact that the applicant’s effectively subsidised its financial position, it would have closed long before March 2020.
- 3.14. Objections to the original proposal have been predominantly from those who did not patronise the Mermaid when it was operating.
- 3.15. A review of the accounts clearly demonstrates that the business was unviable and therefore we have demonstrated that in the balance of probability, the business was both surplus to the requirements of the village and not economically viable, in accordance with Policy 32. There is no requirement to engage with the element of the policy as to whether the building is unfit for purpose.

## 4. DESIGN

### Use

- 4.1. The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Surfleet and therefore the principle of residential use is acceptable and complies with Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan ('the local plan').
- 4.2. The existing Inn could be converted back to two dwellings, but it is felt that two sizeable dwellings so close to the road and with compromised outside amenity space, would not be a viable project. The decision was therefore taken to look at converting the entire building into apartments, specifically for the over 55s. This can be done with little or no alteration to the exterior (save from the removal of a relatively modern wooden extension close to the Stockhouse Lane entrance). There are relatively few internal features of note, other than attractive ceiling plasterwork in the communal stairwells which will remain. It is, therefore, proposed to change the use of the principal building into 5 apartments (2 x 1 bed and 3 x 2 bed) with access from Stockhouse Lane, together with an area of riverside amenity and refurbishment of the existing toilets and garage to be used for bicycle and incidental storage by the occupiers of the apartments.
- 4.3. In addition to the change of use of the principal building, it is also proposed to erect a terrace of 3 x 3 bed dwellings within what is the beer garden and car park and a further 2 bed dwelling to be erected following the demolition of an existing single storey outbuilding to the west of the Stockhouse Lane access. The latter proposal will also see the visibility splays at this junction improved. The increase in the number of dwellings on the beer gardens has been undertaken following a design review after the Mermaid was Listed. The location of the row of the terra was once occupied by the brewery buildings and cottages and comprised a significant overall footprint. The revised proposal therefore draws on this historic legacy.
- 4.4. The modest cottage-scale dwelling on Stockhouse Lane will be in the same location (but not as wide) as the existing building. Again, the design of this element of the proposal has been revisited following the Listing of the Mermaid and now reinforces the Stockhouse Lane frontage.

- 4.5. The three terraced dwellings proposed within the beer garden will take advantage of views of the river with separate parking accessed off Stockhouse Lane. Looking at the historic development in the area, it is evident that riverside development adjacent to the Mermaid and the bridge have in the past been a feature of this part of Surfleet and it is this we are looking to reflect, albeit with a considerably smaller footprint than once occupied this part of the curtilage.
- 4.6. We understand that the operation of the Mermaid has caused problems with local residents in the past. Like many similar establishments, the Mermaid has needed to make the best use of the assets available on site and these have included the well-tended beer garden and external bar area.
- 4.7. The removal of the existing use will have a benefit in terms of impact on local residents. The proposed residential use of the site will be compatible with the existing character of development in the area and therefore accords with local plan Policy 2, 1).

#### **Amount and layout**

- 4.8. The conversion of the principal building has been proposed in such a way that requires very little internal and external alterations albeit that there have been some changes to the proposed internal layout following the Listing of the Mermaid, which will mean that the building will retain its prominent status within the street scene. The wooden lean-to kitchen is to be removed but the brick gable to this element will be retained. The attached external kitchen (incorrectly described as a 'tap room' by many) is to be retained and refurbished. The coal cellar element will be left as it is as there is no reasonable use for this part and the raised ground floor element will be used for incidental storage for occupiers of the main building.
- 4.9. The required parking for the 5 apartments can all be provided within the existing car park area and so there will be little if any change to the character of the area, or any wider impact. The number of apartments is therefore appropriate to the building and area and is in accordance with local plan policy 2, 1).

- 4.10. The historic significance of the Listed Building is described in the separate documents produced by Liz Mayle BA(Hons) MA (Dist) IHBC Historic Buildings Consultant.
- 4.11. A proposed 3 bed detached dwelling will be constructed on the site of an existing single storey outbuilding which runs parallel with Stockhouse Lane. The design of this has been revisited and now better reflects the existing scale of the building currently on site. The removal of the existing building enables in part the improvement to the access on to Stockhouse Lane.
- 4.12. Views of the site are dominated by the heavy iron lattice work of the bridge which serve to significantly interrupt views up and down the river, depending on which side of the bridge you are on. The site itself is characterised by the Inn paraphernalia, including hard surfaced patios, car parking, external bar and thatched parasols that line the top of the bank which is well above the River Glen waterline. The opportunity, therefore, exists to redevelop this area and the Inn in a manner that will enhance the character of the area and improve the amenity of those occupying adjacent dwellings.
- 4.13. The proposed terrace of dwellings is set back at least 9m from the top of the river bank due to the need to reflect a 9m construction distance set by the Environment Agency. Each dwelling has sufficient amenity space and are sufficiently separated from adjacent development and therefore provide for a suitable layout having regard to the character of the area and constraints of the site. Parking is provided in accordance with the standards set out in the local plan and is located off a private drive to the north of the proposals.
- 4.14. Overall, the amount of development proposed, together with the layout, work well on site and respond to the general grain of development in the area and therefore the proposal accords with local plan policy 2, 1).

### **Scale**

- 4.15. The proposed conversion of the Inn into apartments has no impact in terms of scale as this element of the proposal can be accommodated within the existing building. An existing brick outbuilding which currently incorporates toilets will be retained and converted into ancillary storage for the apartments in addition to the former kitchen building.

- 4.16. A 2-bed detached dwelling is proposed on the Stockhouse Lane frontage, and this is essentially replacing an existing single storey brick outbuilding which is used as a cold store. The dwelling will be 3m to the eaves and 4.7m to the ridge and has similar proportions and will occupy a similar position in the street scene as the existing building. The scale of this dwelling has been designed to compliment the existing grain of development along Stockhouse Lane and is compliant with local plan policy 2, 1).
- 4.17. The open beer garden and remaining car park area presents an opportunity to develop a number of riverside dwellings which will also have the benefit of the existing mooring on the River Glen. Although it would be possible to develop the site with more than three dwellings, it was felt that the revised proposal provides for a better relationship with existing development, especially along Stockhouse Lane. On the southern side of the River Glen there is a Public Footpath with a number of mature trees and then a terrace of two storey dwellings fronting onto Surfleet Road. To the west of the site there are recent examples of riverside development which in one case is significantly closer to the river than that being proposed here. The proposed dwellings measure 5.4m to the eaves and 8.4m (max) to the ridge.
- 4.18. Within the immediate vicinity of The Mermaid, there is a wide range of building styles and sizes, and it is considered that the proposal will compliment that variety whilst reflecting the Listed Building and its setting, in accordance with local plan Policy 29 – The Historic Environment.

### **Landscaping**

- 4.19. Other than for the open beer garden, which is laid to lawn and two small hedges, there are no other soft landscape features within the site, which is dominated by ancillary buildings and hard landscaping. The proposal will see the opportunity to introduce small areas of planting to soften the areas of parking and to provide a better environment for the occupiers of the apartments. There are small, landscaped areas immediately in front of three of the ground floor apartments and an area adjacent to the river. There is also easy access to the public footpath and the open countryside beyond.

- 4.20. The three riverside dwellings have good sized south facing gardens going down to the river together with north facing gardens through which there is pedestrian access to each unit. There will be domestic scale planting to suit within each garden area.

### **Appearance**

- 4.21. The proposed dwelling on the Stockhouse Lane frontage will be constructed in traditional red brick with a tiled roof. The design is similar to that seen elsewhere along the Lane and complies with local plan policy 2, 2).
- 4.22. The terrace of three properties along the riverside will be constructed in red brick with slate roof over and are set at angles to reflect the former brewery footprint which was somewhat random. The fenestration will have a slightly industrial look befitting the history of the site and small elements of timber cladding will also add to the likely ad-hoc nature of how the buildings on site probably looked like in their heyday.

### **Access**

- 4.23. There is an existing access directly off Surfleet Road immediately adjacent to the bridge which is proposed to be closed off and used as pedestrian access only. The sole vehicular access into the site will be via the Stockhouse Lane access which will be widened, and visibility splays improved, following the removal of the building to the west.
- 4.24. Vehicle and cycle parking for both the apartments and the new build dwellings is in accordance with the required standards as set out in Policy 36 of the local plan.
- 4.25. In overall terms, the level of traffic movements associated with the current proposal is no greater than were The Mermaid to carry on being used a restaurant/pub with letting rooms and the proposal will result in an improvement in highway safety.
- 4.26. Lincolnshire County Council as local highway authority was informally consulted as part of the pre-application process and no objection was raised to the proposal and it is not considered that the addition of a further small dwelling will materially alter this position.

---

## **5. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. Surfleet has no conservation area and two Listed Buildings namely the Grade I Listed St Laurence Church and the Mermaid. The church occupies a prominent location on the Station Road/Gosberton Road junction and views on the southern and northern approaches into the village are dominated by the church spire which is noticeably out of vertical. A number of large trees dominate the southern part of the churchyard.
- 5.2. The centre of Surfleet village is dominated by the main road running north south and the iron road bridge which was constructed in 1884 and which spans the River Glen. The bridge has a dedicated pedestrian crossing which lies outside the ironwork.
- 5.3. A comprehensive Statement of Heritage Significance has been produced, which includes a heritage impact assessment, to support this revised proposal. This identifies the significance of the Listed Building and the impact our proposals have on the heritage assets.
- 5.4. We conclude that there will be less than significant harm arising from the proposal and indeed there will be some benefit from the redevelopment of the car park and removal of the associated beer garden paraphernalia within the curtilage of the Mermaid. There will be a wider public benefit from the reuse of the principal Listed Building which at present lies empty. The proposal therefore accords with local plan policy 29 and the provisions of the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 197 and 201.



---

## **6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1. A Flood Risk Assessment has been produced which shows that the development is not at risk of flooding and that there will be no impact on other land uses or land users.
- 6.2. The development is classed a non-major and therefore there are no developer contributions associated with the proposal.
- 6.3. Our client is not aware that the single storey building to be demolished is used by protected species, however, notwithstanding the grant of planning permission, work on site has to have regard to the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 6.4. A dedicated point for refuse to be left on collection day is proposed on site and the carry distances involved comply with the Building Regulations Act.
- 6.5. There is a community defibrillator located on the single storey building located on the Stockhouse Lane frontage and it is understood that this will be relocated following consultations with Surfleet Parish Council.
- 6.6. There are no alterations proposed to the existing moorings/landing stage as part of this application which is wholly owned and maintained by the applicant.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1. Following the decision to add the Mermaid to the Listed Building register as a Grade II Listed Building, we have comprehensively revisited the proposals and also provided a well-researched and detailed description of the significance of the Listed Building and its setting. The revisions have been informed by further positive pre-application consultation with the local planning authority. In addition, informal advice from the local highway authority concluded with there being no objection, in principle to the proposal in its original guise and we do not consider that the addition of one small dwelling would affect that original response.
- 7.2. The re-use of The Mermaid has come about following the closure of the business coupled with an unsuccessful attempt to sell it as a going concern. The only interest has been from those looking to carry the similar sort of development to what is being proposed here.
- 7.3. A total of 5 apartments and 4 houses results in a form of development that is in keeping with the general grain of development in the area and the minimal changes to the Listed Building will ensure it retains its prominent position in the centre of the village. Equally, the introduction of a new use within the building, in the face of no one being prepared to make a reasonable offer and carry on with the existing use, will ensure that the building continues to make a positive contribution to the centre of the village.
- 7.4. The proposals result in less than significant harm to the character of the Listed Building and no impact on the reasonable amenity of surrounding dwellings.
- 7.5. We have demonstrated that the Mermaid is both "surplus to requirements" and "..not economically viable" and therefore accords with Policy 32.
- 7.6. The proposal fully accords with the provisions of the development plan and national guidance as set out in the NPPF and is acceptable in all other respects.

## **APPENDIX A**

### Comments on Design

**From:** Watkinson, Gregory [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 15 September 2022 11:00  
**To:** Lewis Smith [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Polly Harris-Gorf [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Pre-Application Advice - PE-00293-22 Robert Doughty Consultancy Ltd

Hello Lewis,

Many thanks for sending over this updated design. I can confirm that I am satisfied that from my perspective in the conservation role, this proposed design is much more preferable over the previous incarnations, and achieves a good level of visual interest without appearing contrived whilst making decent use of features well suited to the setting, including the much appreciated variations in roof levels etc. With that said, I will remind you that given the sensitive setting, emphasis will very much be in getting the material details right and therefore, you should expect that the key to success will be in the commitment to high-quality, traditional materials and fittings throughout.

Whilst details of the parking are not included within the drawings you've kindly sent over, I would just for the sake of clarity reiterate Polly's latest comments regarding the parking, in that we would prefer not to see a cluster of garages to the rear of the site and therefore, some form of parking court would likely be preferable.

Many thanks.

Kind regards,  
Greg Watkinson

**Gregory Watkinson BA (Hons), MA**  
Conservation Officer  
South Holland District Council

[REDACTED]  
[www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk) | [www.boston.gov.uk](http://www.boston.gov.uk)  
[www.e-lindsey.gov.uk](http://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk) | [www.selcp.co.uk](http://www.selcp.co.uk)

Please note that any informal officer opinion expressed by this email is without prejudice and is not binding on the Council during the consideration of any formal application.



## **APPENDIX B**

### Comments on Statement of Heritage Significance

**From:** Watkinson, Gregory [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 11 August 2022 14:20  
**To:** Lewis Smith [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Polly Harris-Gorf [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** The Mermaid - Surfleet - Statement of Heritage Significance

Hello Lewis,

I write to confirm that I am satisfied with the content and quality of the Statement of Heritage Significance provided to us informally in supplement of an upcoming amendment to the proposal at The Mermaid Inn, Surfleet.

Section 16, Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (2021) states that the LPA should require applicants to;

“(…)describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. (…)”

The document submitted is substantial in its detail and is more than proportionate to the Grade II listed nature of the building, and it is obvious that a suitable level of expertise has been employed to develop this document. In that way, as a draft preceding a full HIA once the final proposals are ready, I am satisfied that the document more than fulfils the applicant’s obligations to detail and describe the significance of the heritage asset. Furthermore, on reading the document, supplemented by the information gained via a site visit to the property to discuss the archaeology / history of the building, I am satisfied that the arguments made within the statement are cogent, well-reasoned and evidence-based and as such, I would be more than content to use such a document as a base upon which to write a report/make a recommendation. It is competent, well-argued, accompanied by appropriate references and illustrative photos and therefore, I wish to raise no objection to its use.

Many thanks.

Kind regards,  
Greg

Gregory Watkinson BA(Hons), MA Conservation Officer South Holland District Council

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk)

Please note that any informal officer opinion expressed by this email is without prejudice and is not binding on the Council during the consideration of any formal application.



The information contained in this email is confidential and intended only for the person or organisation to which it is addressed. If you have received it by mistake, please disregard and notify the sender immediately. Unauthorised disclosure or use of such information may be a breach of legislation or confidentiality and the content may be legally privileged. Any improper dissemination, forwarding, printing, or copying of this email is strictly prohibited. Emails sent from and received by employees of South Holland District Council may be monitored. They may also be disclosed to other people under legislation, particularly the Freedom of Information Act 2000, GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. If you have contacted the Council for a service any personal data you share will be used to help you access its services, or to answer your enquiry in line with our Privacy Policy. For full details of your rights please visit our website at [www.sholland.gov.uk](http://www.sholland.gov.uk). Unless this email relates to South Holland District Council business it will be regarded by the Council as personal and will not be authorised by or sent on behalf of the Council.