

Home from hotel proposal revealed

FORMAL plans have been submitted to turn an Aldwick hotel into a care home.

Livability has sent a planning application for the change of use of the Russell Hotel, on King's Parade, to Arun District Council.

The charity intends to provide accommodation for the 15 disabled residents of its nearby Ashley House.

This will be on the three-storey hotel's first floor. The second floor and parts of the ground floor will be mothballed while detailed

By KEVIN SMITH
kevin.smith@bognor.co.uk
01243 828777

talks and a feasibility study into their future take place.

Potential options include respite care, a hub of support and activities for disabled people around Bognor, supported accommodation and learning chances for people with disabilities.

The potential to keep the popular swimming pool for use by residents will also be considered.

A statement by Jo Tasker, of Livability's planning agent Robinson Escott Planning, says: "The Russell Hotel offers an ideal opportunity for the re-provision of the Ashley House service following the proposed change of use.

"The proposal involves minimal external changes

to the building that are limited to a small lift overrun shaft associated with a proposed new internal lift to accommodate people using wheelchairs and for evacuation purposes."

The Russell Hotel opened in 2001 with 40 double guest rooms, a fitness centre, swimming pool, restaurant and lounge. It replaced the previous Russell Hotel which dated back to the 1940s.

It continues to be run by the Action for Blind People charity. But Ms Tasker states its figures show the hotel is losing money.

"This statement demonstrates the hotel has not been viable for many years and, based on a realistic forward projection, the hotel will continue to rely on charitable funds for the foreseeable future, a position which is not sustainable."

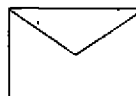
Much of the financial information has been kept confidential but the hotel's occupancy rates have been shown. They were 77.7 per cent in 2011/12, 72.3 per cent the next year and 70.1 per cent from last March.

Out of 5,335 guest nights booked between April, 2012, and the next March, some 622 were taken by visually impaired guests.

Livability has been searching to replace Ashley House since 2002. The Aldwick Road building was built in the Victorian period and is no longer fit for purpose, Ms Tasker said.

It is popular but new residents cannot live there because of its unsuitable facilities, including a lack of en-suite bathrooms.

Ashley House will be sold and the proceeds used to fund Livability's activities.



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8 Eastgate Square, Chichester,
PO19 1JN, or
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