



Historic England

NORTH WEST OFFICE

Mr Adrian Dowd  
Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Planning Department, Council Offices  
Church Walk  
CLITHEROE  
Lancashire  
BB7 2RA

Direct Dial: 0161 2421424

Our ref: P00482879

9 November 2015

Dear Mr Dowd

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015**

**ABBEY WORKS, KING STREET, WHALLEY, LANCS, BB7 9SP  
Application No 3/2015/0794**

Thank you for your letter of 20 October 2015 notifying Historic England of the above application. We will comment on this application on the basis of the affect it has on the character and appearance of Whalley Conservation Area; on the affect it has on the setting of the grade I listed St Mary's and All Saints Church and the scheduled and grade I listed Whalley Abbey.

**Summary**

Whalley is a medieval town developed around a Cistercian Abbey on the banks of the River Calder and the medieval parish church of St Mary's and All Saints. The proposal is for the demolition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Abbey Works and its replacement with a surface car park. We do not support the principle of a surface car park at this sensitive location and therefore we strongly recommend that our concerns are considered in the determination of the application.

**Historic England Advice**

Whalley is a small medieval town on the River Calder containing a number of highly-graded heritage assets within its conservation area. The town initially developed around the grade I listed 13<sup>th</sup> century parish church to the north of the abbey site. The scheduled and grade I listed Cistercian Abbey was founded on the banks of the River Calder in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The conservation area therefore contains 800 years of evidence of the development of the town and is characterised by organic growth, change and periodic renewal. Most of the surviving buildings are built from traditional local materials although there are elements behind the main streets, such as the light industrial site at Abbey Works, which are of a different character and tell us about the needs of the town moving into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The grade I status of the church and abbey place them in the top 2.5% of listed buildings nationally.



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The proposal is to demolish the majority of buildings on the Abbey Works site and replace them with a surface car park.

We are concerned about the principle of this development. This is a sensitive site in terms of the surviving surrounding built form and the high potential for below-ground archaeology within the direct setting of the grade I parish church and the scheduled and grade I listed abbey. This is not an appropriate location for a surface car park as it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of two grade I listed buildings by creating a large area of hard-standing with lighting and other paraphernalia such as signage and parking meters. We recommend that if a need for car parking is identified by the local authority that an options appraisal is commissioned to identify a location which minimises the impact on this nationally important group of heritage assets.

Furthermore, the application is lacking in the appraisal of the significance of the existing buildings on the site as well as the contribution the site makes to the setting of designated heritage assets and the archaeological potential below the site. The information provided is not proportionate to the high significance of the heritage assets affected and therefore does not meet the requirements of paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In determining applications local planning authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a conservation area as well as the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 s72; NPPF paragraph 131). NPPF paragraph 137 requires Local Planning Authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and the settings of listed buildings to enhance or better reveal their significance. It is for the local authority to weigh up if the level of harm caused by the development is outweighed by the public benefits derived from the scheme (NPPF para 134).

The proposed development does not preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Whalley conservation area and furthermore a surface car park in this location would harm the significance of the grade I parish church of St Mary's and All Saints and the scheduled and grade I listed Whalley Abbey. We therefore cannot support the application from a heritage perspective.

### **Recommendation**

From a historic environment point of view we do not support the principle of a surface car park at this location; however, if the significance of the site is understood and the impact of a scheme on heritage assets is minimised there could be a sensitive



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development on this site. We strongly recommend that our concerns above are reflected in the balancing exercise in the determination of the application.

Please contact me if we can be of further assistance. We would be grateful to receive a copy of the decision notice in due course. This will help us to monitor actions related to changes to historic places.

Yours sincerely

**Alice Ullathorne**

Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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