

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT



UNION MILL WATT STREET SADBEN

CHANGE OF USE OF PART OF EXISTING FORMER MILL BUILDINGS FROM ANTIQUES DISTRIBUTION CENTRE TO USE FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF VANDAL AND WEATHERPROOF TELEPHONES

OUR REF : DAC/01

DATE : September 2016

1. INTRODUCTION.

This statement has been prepared for Ribble Valley Borough Council to accompany a planning application for a material change of use at part of Union Mill, Watt Street, Sabden. The site lies within the Sabden Conservation Area and therefore this statement aims to address the requirements of paragraph 129 of National Planning Policy Framework, which states that :

‘ In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant 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.’

This statement will therefore consider the *significance* of the existing buildings as a heritage asset and considers the perceived impact of the proposed works.

In accordance with the above national guidance, this statement is not detailed given the scale of the works proposed, the importance of the asset and is therefore commensurate in scale to the small nature of the development proposed.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Sabden Conservation Area (CA) has been the subject of a Conservation Area Assessment (CAA) and Conservation Management Guidance (CMG) produced in 2005 and 2006. The Conservation Area was designated in April 2007.

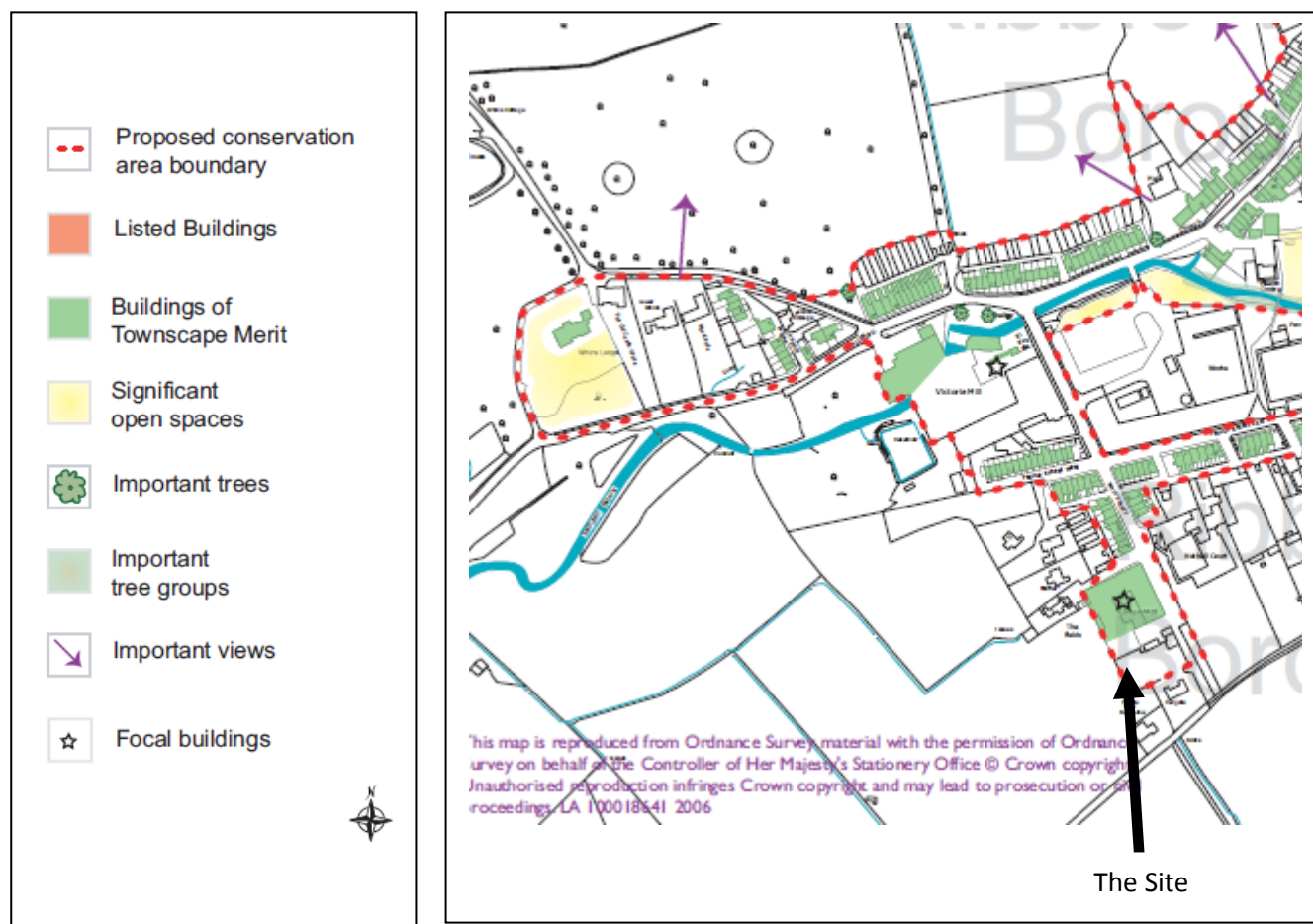
The CMG identifies the issues that for the Conservation Area in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are : the industrial history; the location in the AONB; streamside village of former workers cottages. The weaknesses are : loss of key buildings; traffic; insensitive late C20 buildings. ‘Opportunities’ are identified at the footpath at Top Row and a display board for the industrial past, close to Union Mill. Threats are : loss of architectural details ; loss of amenity and shops; traffic. It contains guidance on specific matters such as external alterations; stone cleaning; painting; masonry; pointing; windows and doors; rainwater goods and boundaries. It generally observes that the buildings in the CA are well kept and that there are few opportunities for new development. Key design principles are included that relate to street frontage; historic pattern; scale; solid to void proportions; conceal parking; local identity and re-use of buildings. Apart from these physical matters, we are unable to find any reference in the CMG to proposed uses within the CA.

The CAA, in its spatial analysis, says that there are no landmark buildings that stand out in the townscape, which is undistinguished and low key with only two listed buildings in the CA. In relation to activities and uses, the CAA points out that the CA is mostly residential with the former mills closed and business that occupy them employing fewer people, the Antiques Centre in Union Mill being one. Traffic is identified as being quite but rush hour short cuts through the village is problematic.

The CAA identifies key unlisted buildings of townscape merit and Union Mill is identified as the best preserved of Sabden’s mills, being set up in 1856 for weaving, which came to an end in 1964. In 1987 the mill was restored and occupied as Pendle Antiques Centre selling antique furniture and bric-a-brac.

Figure 1 below is an extract from the Townscape Appraisal map that accompanies the CAA and

shows the unlisted Key Buildings judged to have a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA.



Extract from Townscape Appraisal Map.

The key buildings means that they are not statutorily listed and so there is no requirement for listed building consent to be obtained and there is no regulatory control over works that do not affect the external appearance of the building. As a non listed building a large amount of those works have previously been carried out to these buildings as they have adapted to different uses over the years. All of the terraces fronting Watt Street and the nearby Pendle Street West are also identified as Buildings of Townscape Merit.

3. HERITAGE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines the historic environment in terms of heritage assets. The significance of a heritage asset relates to its heritage interest, including archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic and the significance of an asset derives from both its physical presence and its setting.

Paragraph 128 to 129 require a local planning authority to assess the significance of any heritage asset affected and that this is relative to the asset's importance and no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of any proposal on their significance. This assessment is to be taken into account by local authorities.

Paragraph 131 states that local authorities should take account of the desirability of new development sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 132 sets out policy guidance on for the consideration of impact of development on the significance of a heritage asset. The more important the asset, the greater weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Paragraphs 133 and 134 distinguish between substantial harm and less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset and where less than substantial harm is identified, any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

The development plan for the area contains policies that address development within conservation areas. Key Statement EN5 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy sets out that the historic environment and its heritage assets will be preserved and enhanced. This to be achieved by: ensuring viable uses for the long term protection of heritage assets; to review CA appraisals; seek benefits that preserve or enhance the asset and use Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development.

Policy DME4 has a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings.

4. THE PROPOSAL

What is proposed is an application for a material change of use of part of the existing Union Mill buildings from its established antique retail use to a 'high tech' class B1 manufacturing and office use for DAC Ltd, which produces vandal and weatherproof telephones. No alterations are proposed to the external appearance of the building. The existing building already has external door entrances and openings such that no further alterations are needed to accommodate the proposed use. Internally there is a large open space that is ideally suited for the operation of the intended use.

Externally there is existing access to the site and a concrete yard for servicing and car parking. The submitted plans with this application show the building as existing and proposed. The picture below shows the existing entrance and parking arrangements.



The existing access and servicing yard.

5. AN ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The heritage asset and its setting.

The application building lies within the Sabden Conservation Area. The available design and policy documents for that area show Union Mill as being of significance to that area and identifies that on the Townscape Appraisal map as being a building of townscape merit. However, it is apparent that the building identified as being of that interest is the former mill building itself, which contains the old mill chimney and is at the front part of the site, highly visible in the streetscape. This building is at the rear of that and whilst it may be debated whether it is identified as part of that heritage asset or not, this building does not have the prominence of the former mill building in the streetscape, being as it is, mostly out of sight and to the rear.

The main historic characteristics of this building is that has natural stone walls, with cement render painted white with exposed quoins at the corners on the courtyard elevation, where there is also a modern canopy over the loading area. On the other elevations the stonework is exposed. The roof retains its slate covering. The open courtyard to the front has been covered by a concrete apron.

The remainder of the buildings in the locality are, in common with the remainder of the CA, architecturally unremarkable. It does however contain terraces typical of the historic development of the CA and contain a uniformity that creates visual interest, with local stone being the dominant material use.

Union Mill, of which the application building forms part, does have merit in that it is a prominent building in this mostly two storey local townscape. Most notably the presence of the mill chimney marks this building out as being of significance. However, the building the subject of this application is not part of that main mill building but is an outbuilding to the rear, only mainly visible from the immediate front to the rear of the service yard.

Given the above, we assess the significance of the application building, using the normally accepted levels of significance advocated by English Heritage '*Conservation Principles*' as a *Low Level of Significance*. That is defined as '*An undesignated asset important at a local level, including buildings that make a positive contribution to a conservation area. Some historic fabric but limited evidence and makes little contribution to significance. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is more scope for adaptation.*'

6. AN EXPLANATION OF THE DESIGN CONCEPT FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposals are a reuse of the existing building with no alteration to its built fabric externally. Internally, the existing space will be subdivided into work areas, including toilets and separate office space.

Externally, there is likewise no need for any works as the service yard already has a concrete apron and there is a canopy projecting over the loading area to the building. As there are no physical works proposed, it follows that there is little, if any design philosophy to be adopted or followed.

7. THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Effect on the building.

In a conservation area, the effective test for any development as set out by the requirements of section 72 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is that regard is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

The starting point for assessing the impact of the proposed development on the conservation area is the value to that area of the building itself. . In this case, there is a good amount of published guidance and assessment already available and/or adopted by the Council. In those assessments carried out, the former mill part of this site is identified as being important to the setting of the conservation area or of being of importance to its character. That building is identified as a key building in the CA. However, this building is of a more low key nature to that of the main mill building and is at the rear of the site and is not so identified as being important to the character of the CA.

The proposals keep the existing buildings intact because there are no external alterations required so that their overall existing character will not be lost through the development and that is to be viewed as a positive benefit in retaining the historic appearance of the building and the consequent nil effect to the physical impact of the proposed change of use on the character and appearance of the CA.

Effect on the setting of the conservation area.

The heritage asset to be assessed in this case is the Sabden Conservation Area. In defining the setting of that heritage asset, the surroundings in which the asset is experienced must be looked at. Those elements may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the asset or that effect may be neutral.

In this case, this building is mostly hidden from the main part of Sabden by the existing Union Mill building. Glimpsed views of it are available from the west across open fields but there is no prominent view of the application building from that direction and in any such views as are available, the building will remain the same so that there will be little, if any, noticeable change to them.

The overall impact on the setting of the conservation area including both the negative and positive will be *negligible*.

8. OVERALL IMPACT ON SIGNIFICANCE.

Overall, there will be a negative impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage asset. This results from the low level of significance of the application building that we have identified and the negligible impact on the heritage asset identified.

That negligible level of significance does not require a high level of justification to be provided. Therefore in this case, the impact on significance has been identified as one where the buildings should be retained but that there is more scope for adaptation.

9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The proposals put forward in this application are not significant in their scale or impact. They propose to adapt the existing building to new uses, thereby achieving the conservation objective of preserving the character of the conservation area. Therefore the principle issue to be considered is the consequences of accommodating those uses to the external appearance of the building and assessing those changes on the significance of the heritage asset, the Sabden Conservation Area.

The work published on the Sabden CA identified Union Mill as being a building of Townscape merit. There are no important views identified in the CA appraisal at or near to this site and neither are there any listed buildings nearby identified. The application building is located at the rear of the site and is not the most significant part of Union Mill, that being the front two storey part with its mill chimney. That identification accords with our assessment in that the building should be preserved but that some alteration to them can be accommodated. That is what the application proposals intend to do. Therefore the view is taken that the application proposals satisfy the requirements of paragraph 134 of NPPF by optimising the viable use of the building when weighed against the less than substantial harm that results to the heritage asset.