

**HERITAGE STATEMENT TO SUPPORT PLANNING APPLICATION
FOR PROPOSED MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT
AT 53-57 BERRY LANE, LONGRIDGE**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been produced to support a planning application to Ribble Valley Borough Council, for a mixed use development at 53-57 Berry Lane, Longridge. It has been written by Stephen Haigh MA, on the instruction of the owners John and Janet Swift, through their agent Judith Douglas Town Planning Ltd, and with reference to scheme drawings by AW+A Architects. A site visit was made by the writer on 13 September 2021.
- 1.2 The site as a whole lies within the Longridge Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset), and a part of it is identified within the council's Conservation Area Appraisal map as "Buildings of Townscape Merit" (a non-designated heritage asset).

2 The existing site

- 2.1 The site stands on the south-west side of and faces onto Berry Lane, and backs onto Warwick Street, in Longridge town centre (NGR: SD 60245 37515). The frontage comprises three adjoining units (nos. 53, 55, & 57), each of two storeys, which form part of a row of similar buildings between Towneley Road and Stanley Street. The site widens to the rear, where it includes various single-storey commercial structures with intervening yard, with access from Warwick Street.

3 Summary of proposals

Berry Lane frontage

- 3.1 Minor changes to the existing shop fronts are proposed, to produce a more balanced and uniform arrangement which would allow the ground floor to be divided into two separate retail units, while retaining the tripartite division to the façade. Additionally, all the first floor uPVC windows would be replaced with new hardwood units, and the first floor converted to apartments.

Warwick Street frontage

- 3.2 It is proposed to demolish the existing modern units and replace them with a group of interlinked two-storey structures, comprising five gabled blocks, accommodating retail space on the ground floor, with apartments above. The form and materials of the new rear buildings would be largely modern, but acknowledges and continues the architectural theme of the neighbouring historic former cornmill.

4 Historical background

- 4.1 Longridge arose to local prominence as a settlement in the late 18th and particularly the 19th century, and owed its economic success in those early years to stone quarrying and handloom cotton weaving. The building of the railway in the 1840s, which linked the town to Preston, provided a strong impetus for industrial expansion, and steam-powered cotton mills and foundries then thrived, leading to a rapid growth in population and the services provided for them.
- 4.2 Berry Lane was an established thoroughfare by the 1840s ("Burey Lane", according to the Ordnance Survey), but at that date was entirely rural in character, and ran south-east up to the area of early settlement, around the market place. However because it was crossed by the railway serving Tootle Heights Quarry, it became the site of the town's station, and subsequently the focus of commercial and retail development within the town.
- 4.3 Nos. 53 to 57 Berry Lane were built in two phases some time between the 1840s and the 1890s, and their architectural form suggests the later part of this date range.
- 4.4 No. 53 forms the end unit of what was originally a group of four, while nos. 55 and 57 seem to have been built up to these as a pair, and according to historic Ordnance Survey maps, were at that date separated on the ground floor by a passage running from the street to the back yard (as is still the case with a number of adjoining properties situated between here and Stanley Street).
- 4.5 Historic maps also show that Warwick Street was established much later than Berry Lane, in the period between the 1890s and 1910, and that this rear part of the proposed development site has always comprised an irregular arrangement of buildings and yards, much as it does today.

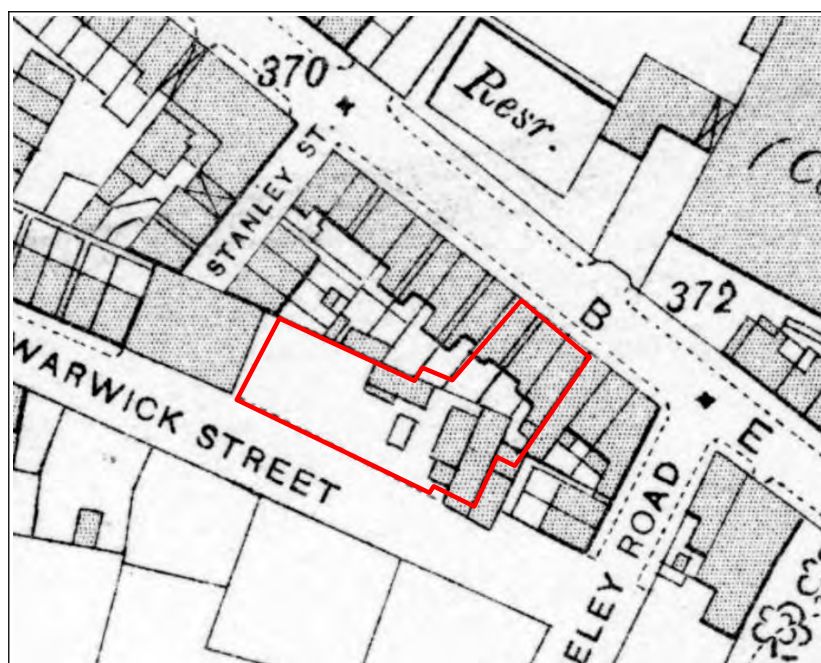


Figure 1: OS 1:2500 map, 1912

Red line shows approximate boundary of proposed development

5 The Longridge Conservation Area

- 5.1 The Longridge Conservation Area was designated in 1979 and extended in 2003. Its historic buildings are mainly 19th century and urban in character, with those along Berry Lane largely comprising two or three storeys, and located at the back of the pavement, without forecourts. They include terraces of stone-built houses, with ground floor shops, interspersed with some green spaces¹.

6 Proposed development site: setting

- 6.1 The Berry Lane frontage sits within a continuous terrace of similar properties, between Towneley Road and Stanley Street, whose ground floors all have retail or other commercial occupiers. These contrast with the large petrol station and 20th century detached shop opposite. At the rear, Warwick Street forms the conservation area boundary, and the setting to this part of the proposed development site is dominated by low-rise 20th century commercial and industrial units, as well as the rather larger Old Corn Mill (clad in steel sheeting), and some modern housing. The historic boundary wall of the back yard to no. 59 does however remain in situ, and is notable for its triangular coping, as do some adjacent outbuildings, which back onto the proposed development site.

¹The Conservation Studio 2005 *Longridge Conservation Area Appraisal*

7 The existing buildings

- 7.1 The ground floors of the three units on Berry Lane have separate, full-width shop fronts, dating from the late 20th century or later (photos 1 to 3). Each has a different arrangement, but there are some unifying features, including the sign board and fluted mock pilasters. In their present form, they contribute only in a small way to the conservation area's character and appearance, and offer some potential for enhancement.
- 7.2 The first floor of the Berry Lane frontage is of coursed stonework with the original window surrounds, but large pane uPVC windows, with dark brown frames. The roof is blue slate, and has lost some of its chimneys. These aspects similarly make a small contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 7.3 The rear of the site is considered to be a negative feature of the conservation area (photos 4 to 6). The back wall of the two-storey buildings has been rebuilt in concrete brick, a material also used for a single storey rear wing, and this material, together with the overwhelmingly modern form of the three commercial/industrial buildings, obviously detract from it. The yard between is enclosed by modern galvanized steel security fencing, a further negative feature.

8 Statement of significance

- 8.1 The Berry Lane façade comprises three late 19th century units, which contain modern shop fronts with some traditional features to their ground floors, and little altered first floors. They form part of a continuous street frontage within the town's commercial centre, which makes a very small positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area. Given their present character, the identification of these principal buildings as being of townscape merit does not seem justified; there are much better examples of shops with living accommodation over within the conservation area (eg next door, at nos. 59-61).
- 8.2 The rear of the site along Warwick Street is dominated by 20th century buildings of entirely modern urban form, which have developed in piecemeal fashion, with little reference to context or each other. The street scene here has no aesthetic value and obviously detracts from the character and appearance of the conservation area. The only features which are considered to have a bearing on significance are those historic structures which form a small part of its setting, to the rear of nos. 59 and 61 Berry Lane (photo 7).

9 Impact of proposals on the conservation area

Berry Lane frontage

- 9.1 There would be a small positive impact on the conservation area and buildings of townscape merit arising from improvements to the existing shop fronts and the replacement of uPVC windows.

Warwick Street frontage

- 9.2 Replacement of the existing ad hoc collection of modern structures with the proposed mixed use units would much improve the appearance of this part of the conservation area, through the construction of a unified but varied group of interlinked structures, which would relate positively and sympathetically to the existing neighbouring historic former cornmill to the west. The new building would be overtly modern in form, but would employ a varied palette of materials, to create depth and visual interest, and would be entirely appropriate for its setting within this part of the conservation area. There would be no negative impact on any individual features of the conservation area.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The scheme would both preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, and would be beneficial to those parts of the site considered to be buildings of townscape merit. No negative impact on heritage significance would arise, and so the proposals are entirely acceptable as regards the historic environment.

Stephen Haigh, MA
Buildings Archaeologist
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Photo 1: Berry Lane frontage



Photo 2: Berry Lane frontage



Photo 3: Detail of shop fronts (no. 53 in foreground)



Photo 4: Rear of front block, with modern single storey rear wing



Photo 5: South-east part of site, along Warwick Street



Photo 6: South-west part of site, along Warwick Street



Photo 7: South-west part of site. Rear outbuildings and boundary wall of adjacent properties make small positive contribution to setting and would not be affected by the development