

# **52A Lowergate, Clitheroe, Lancashire:**

## **Heritage statement to support a planning application**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been produced to support a planning application to Ribble Valley Borough Council, for a proposed single-storey rear extension and rear dormer at 52A Lowergate, which lies within the Clitheroe conservation area and is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit by the council.
- 1.2 The statement has been written by Stephen Haigh MA, on the instruction of the applicant Mr Nichol, and with reference to scheme drawings by Peter Hitchen Architects. The local planning authority provided pre-application advice on 2 December 2022 (ref: RV/2022/ENQ/00040), and a site visit was made by the writer on 21 December.

### **2 52A Lowergate**



Photo 1: Front of the house, viewed from Lowergate car park

- 2.1 The application property is a semi-detached house located in Clitheroe town centre (NGR: SD 74383 41797). Although its address is Lowergate, it is actually set back from that thoroughfare behind a large car park, and spatially and visually forms part of a cluster of buildings to the rear of Castle Street and around Swan Courtyard, including the modern Bowland Court. In wider terms, the setting is highly varied in its constitution: the Lowergate car park serves as the dominant foreground to the house, while Bowland Court (built in 1993 as retirement housing) and its grounds also form a substantial component.
- 2.2 The house faces south-east onto its garden, and 54B adjoins to the south-west, with the pair of fronts being approximately mirror images of each other. The garden continues around the north-east gable of 52A to a back yard, enclosed on the north-west side by the rear wall (in random stone) of the buildings of Swan Courtyard, and by coped stone walls of approximately 1.5m height to the other two sides, forming the boundaries with 54B and Bowland Court; there is an outbuilding with single-pitch roof to the rear of 54B. A single-storey, brick outbuilding occupies the west corner of the back yard to 52A.



Photo 2: Back yard and existing outbuilding. Note the high wall of the Swan Courtyard building, and the taller outbuilding to the rear of 54B, its ridge higher than the proposed extension to 52A.





Photo 3: Rear elevation and back yard

- 2.3 The house is very typical of the late nineteenth century. Its front is faced with coursed, pitch-faced sandstone, while the gable and rear are of limewashed or painted random rubble, the former mostly concealed by cement render. There are ashlar dressings to all openings, some of which have been modified, and the roof is blue slate.

### 3 Historic development

- 3.1 The house is believed to date from the 1870s. The Ordnance Survey 1:1056 map of 1849<sup>1</sup> shows the site before construction, as forming part of a large

<sup>1</sup> Clitheroe, Sheet 1, surveyed 1844-6

garden to the rear of the buildings surrounding the yard at the Swan, while the 1886 edition<sup>2</sup> shows the pair of houses as they appear today. They therefore represent infilling within what was previously an undeveloped part of the town centre. The rear outbuilding appears to date from the mid twentieth century.



Photo 4: Back yard. Note how it is very largely screened by other buildings.

## 4 Proposals

### 4.1 The proposals involve:

- demolition of the existing outbuilding and replacement with a single-storey, rendered extension to the house, L-shaped in plan, and occupying the full width of the yard at the rear;
- creation of a new first floor window in the north-east gable;
- construction of a slated dormer to the rear roof pitch;
- replacement of render to gable, and rendering of the exposed part of the rear elevation.

## 5 Identified relevant heritage assets

### 5.1 The property lies within the Clitheroe conservation area<sup>3</sup> (a designated heritage asset under the terms of the NPPF), and falls within what the appraisal terms

<sup>2</sup> Clitheroe, Sheet 1, revised 1884

Character Area 1, "Clitheroe's Historic Core". There are no other designated heritage assets within the vicinity which merit consideration in the planning application, given the small-scale, localised nature of the proposals.

- 5.2 The council's adopted *Townscape Appraisal Map* identifies 52A Lowergate as a "building of townscape merit". Buildings within this category are very widespread within the conservation area, and have evidently not been selected individually for their architectural merit, but rather, it would appear, for their nineteenth century date and collective appearance; almost all terraced housing of that period within the conservation area has been given that status (eg that on St Mary's Street and Brennand Street).

## 6 Statement of heritage significance

- 6.1 52A Lowergate is a semi-detached house dating from about the 1870s, of a very common form for a dwelling of the working or lower middle class at that time, and closely resembles other housing of that type in the town. In keeping with such housing, it has a well-finished front elevation of coursed stone, and side and rear of random stone (and modern render), and a slated roof. It has no special architectural qualities which set it apart from other examples, and makes only a low level contribution to the conservation area. In particular, the side and rear elevations cannot be seen to contribute to heritage significance, and are in any case very largely concealed from public view.
- 6.2 In terms of setting, the house forms small-scale, late nineteenth century infill within the older town centre, set close to the rear of earlier, taller commercial buildings which make a rather more obvious contribution to the conservation area. The house is also set within the more varied and aesthetically less pleasing townscape formed by the Lowergate car park, and some surrounding buildings of different dates and types. The Conservation Area Appraisal describes this part of the town as "marred by the blank aspect of the car park and the 'backstreet' atmosphere of [Lowergate's] southern end".
- 6.3 The existing outbuilding does not contribute towards heritage significance.

## 7 Impact of proposals

- 7.1 The proposals concern only the side and rear of the house, although a very small part of the rear extension would be visible from the front.

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<sup>3</sup> Designated in 1973; extended and given Outstanding Conservation Area status in 1979. See: The Conservation Studio 2005/6 *Clitheroe Conservation Area Appraisal*

- 7.2 None of the proposed changes would cause harm to heritage significance, of either the conservation area, nor any buildings of townscape merit. The majority are set to the rear elevation, which is almost entirely screened from public view, and whose character is obviously that of a domestic back yard, with neither architectural nor historic merit. The proposed roof dormer would be slate-clad and so very much in keeping with the existing arrangement, and would be visible only from one or two very localised viewpoints, where it would not impinge on any significant views.
- 7.3 The pre-application advice takes the view that the proposed dormer would be "anomalous" and "discordant", and would "harm the inherent character of the ...Building of Townscape Merit", but the proposed slated finish, and its largely concealed siting within the conservation area, make this an unnecessarily restrictive standpoint, as the change would be in keeping with the existing roof covering, and to all intents and purposes go unnoticed.
- 7.4 The advice also comments that the proposed rear extension would preferably be stone-faced, and would benefit from a "more sympathetic roof form". However, it is the applicant's view that render would be more appropriate for the setting, as a less intrusive and more honest finish, which would distinguish it from the adjoining historic fabric of the Swan Courtyard building to the rear. The flat roof would be of the minimum height necessary, so would also fulfil the same requirement, and avoid unnecessary visual intrusion.
- 7.5 In summary, it is considered that the proposals would cause no harm to any designated or non-designated heritage assets, and would readily preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, so is wholly acceptable in terms of impact on the historic environment.

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