

Heritage Statement

in connection with

**Proposed Apartment Block on the site of the former British
Legion Club, Towneley Road, Longridge**

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1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Methodology

- 1.1 This heritage statement explores how proposals to build a new apartment block on the site of the former British Legion Club, Towneley Road, might impact upon the heritage significances of any nearby heritage assets. The statement will specifically investigate whether the proposals harm the heritage significances of the Longridge Conservation Area, adjacent to which the proposal site is situated (albeit part of the site encroaches into the Area).
- 1.2 The approach taken in the preparation of this statement adheres to the principle of managing change intelligently, which lies at the heart of national planning policy for conservation of the historic built environment. The methodology employed involves the following sequential steps:
- Establish the nature of the proposed change(s), including the overall aim of the change and any emergent design proposals
 - Identify any designated and/or non-designated heritage assets potentially affected by proposals for change
 - Evaluate the heritage values and significances of the heritage assets, placing particular focus on values and significances that might be affected by the proposed change(s)
 - Produce a statement of significance which is to be used to guide the design of changes in a manner that places conservation of significance as a priority
 - Analyse the potential impact of the finalised design upon the significance(s) of the heritage asset(s)
- 1.3 The statement has been prepared in accordance with the general guidelines set out in the Historic England publications 'Informed Conservation'ⁱ and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance'ⁱⁱ and responds to heritage policies outlined in Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2019). Historic England guidance in preparing heritage statements, entitled 'Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets' (Historic England Advice Note 12, 2019) has also been used. The legal context is set by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. Further guidance has been obtained from the following Historic England publications:
- GPA2 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015)
 - GPA3 - Setting and Views
 - Historic England Advice Notes (HEAN) 1-12

- 1.4 The Longridge Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, published by Ribble Valley Borough Council, have also given specific guidance on the special interests of the Conservation Area and implementation of planning policy.

The Author

- 1.5 Chris O'Flaherty, the author, is a Chartered Building Surveyor and professional member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (MRICS). With a background in the recording, analysis and conservation of historic buildings, the author holds a Master's Degree in Building Heritage and Conservation and specialises in heritage planning matters.

Methods of Research and Investigation

- 1.6 Inspections of the site were carried out in September 2020 to assess its physical nature. Background research has also been conducted to ascertain all relevant contextual matters appertaining to the proposals. In accordance with the NPPF, background research has been proportionate to the nature of the building/site, the proposed change(s) and the likely impact of the change(s).
- 1.7 In terms the site's potential for buried archaeology, this has not been explored beyond scrutiny of historic mapping.

2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

2.1 The site, now occupied by a vacant former British legion Club, sits on the east side of Towneley Road and south west of Towneley Gardens, in Longridge town centre.



Figure 1) Site location – the building and the site are annotated in red

Outline Description & Historical Background

2.2 The British Legion Club is first shown Ordnance Survey mapping in the 1960s (figure 3). It appears at the same time as a new residential apartment block to the south called Towneley House. Both sites were developed following the southerly extension of Towneley Road sometime after WWII, as was the small housing estate to the west of the Club. Prior to this Towneley Road was a short street with a laundry and some C19th and early C20th terraced dwellings towards its northern end, lying to the west of Longridge Railway Station and adjacent to Towneley Gardens (figure 2). The Gardens previously belonged to the Towneley

Arms Hotel, which fronted Longridge Railway station prior to the closure of the railway, removal of the lines and redevelopment of the station buildings in the late 1960s.

- 2.3 The Club is an unattractive timber-clad building with a tiled gabled roof. It has a single storey frontage to Towneley Road rising to a double storey main part which faces a former bowling green to the east. The building lies adjacent to the Longridge Conservation Area, a space designated for special architectural and historic interest which essentially incorporates the historic core of the town. Ribble Valley Borough Council have produced a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2006) for the Longridge Conservation Area. The Appraisal summarises the special interests of the Area as follows:
- 2.4 *"The medieval settlement was further south, around St Lawrence's Chapel, but in the late 18th and 19th centuries a new settlement developed higher up on the edge of the Long Ridge, which forms the northern boundary to the valley of the River Ribble. The surrounding countryside is a transitional area leading up to the dramatic uplands of the Bowland Fells, and is notable for its plentiful supplies of water. The conservation area is based on three streets, with Berry Lane forming the centre. Although there is an early 17th century farmhouse still located within the conservation area, the town largely developed from the late 18th century onwards as a centre for handloom weavers and nail workers. From the mid-19th century, the provision of a railway link to Preston encouraged the further development of the area, with six cotton mills being built in or near the town centre. Local streams supplied the water for the steam power which was used in these mills. Quarrying sandstone was another very important industry. The Longridge Conservation Area contains impressive groups of late 18th and 19th century stone buildings arranged along the three principal streets. There are just four list entries – two 19th century churches, the early farmhouse, and a group of terraced handloom weavers cottages in Higher Road. These are socially significant because they were built and financed by one of the earliest housing associations in the country. Otherwise Longridge is notable for the long rows of terraced housing, built for the cotton mill workers in the mid 19th century. Although post-war housing now largely surrounds the town, the conservation area retains sufficient examples of well detailed and reasonably well preserved late 18th and early 19th century buildings, with their original plots, to justify designation."*
- 2.5 In addition to this summary, the Appraisal also cites Towneley Gardens as a strength of the Conservation Area. Otherwise, the building's categorised as being of some architectural interest in the Appraisal (see also figure 4) do not feature in the immediate vicinity of the Club, with the nearest buildings of any note being some C19th houses towards the northern end of Towneley Road near the junction with Berry Lane. The lack of architectural interest in the immediate vicinity of the former Club is the reason why it is not included within the Conservation Area boundary, with the site sitting close to the modern development of

Towneley House (south) and modern housing estate buildings to the west.

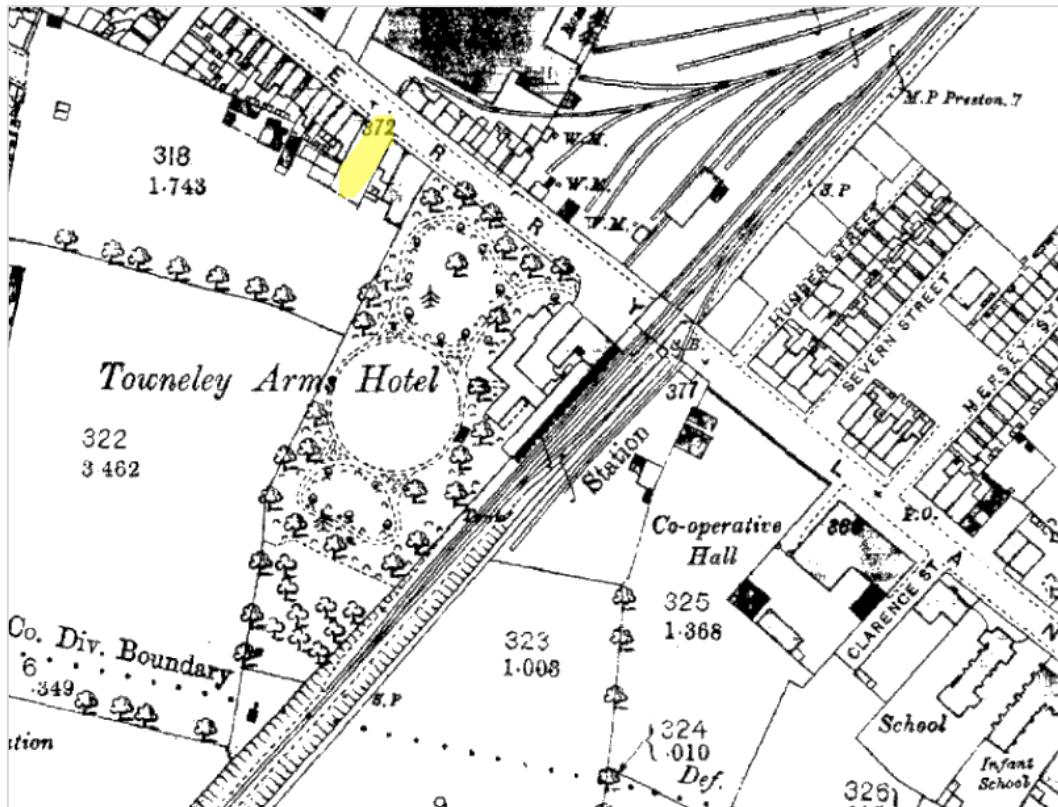


Figure 2) 1890s OS map showing the Towneley Arms Hotel with planned gardens and the short stub road of Towneley Road (highlighted) formed on the south side of Berry Lane

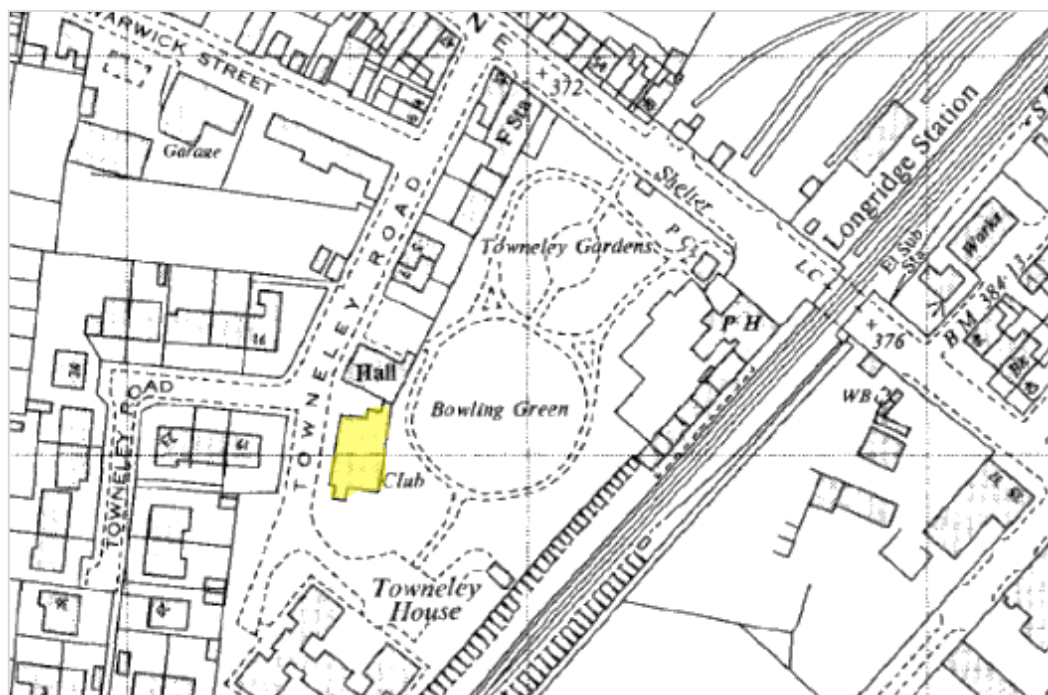


Figure 3) 1960s OS map showing the Club with adjacent bowling green with railway station to the west

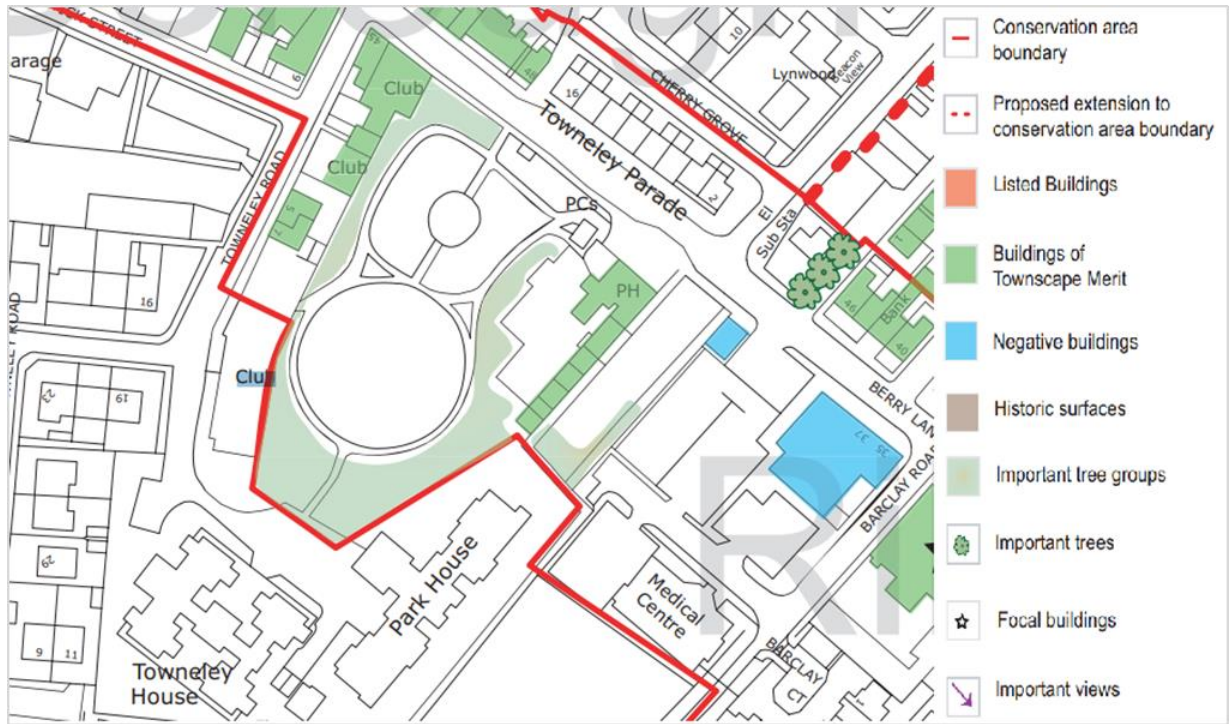


Figure 4) Conservation Area Appraisal map showing buildings and features of interest.



Figure 5) The Club fronting Towneley Road



Figure 6) The Club looking south along Towneley Road with the 1960s block of Towneley House beyond



Figure 7) Looking north along Towneley Road towards Berry Lane, with early C20th houses to the right and modern estate houses to the left



Figure 8) The Club viewed from across the former bowling green with Towneley House to the left and a terrace of new houses to the right



Figure 9) The Club fronting the former bowling green



Figure 10) Views south from Berry Lane across the gardens towards the proposals site



Figure 11) Views south from Berry Lane across the gardens towards the proposals site

Heritage Asset Designations

2.6 The Longridge Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset which was first designated in 1979 and later enlarged.

3 HERITAGE APPRAISAL

Introduction

- 3.1 The following appraisal adheres to guidance published by Historic England (2008 and 2019)^{iii,iv} and relates specifically to the requirement contained in paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), given in extract below:
- 3.2 *“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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.”*
- 3.3 The appraisal begins by identifying and assessing any heritage values/interests that might be affected by the proposals, before evaluating these and composing a ‘Statement of Significance’. The essential purpose of the Statement is to set priorities for conservation of significance and enable an objective assessment on the likely impact of the proposals.

Heritage Interests

- 3.4 The heritage interests explored below are distilled under the following headings: archaeological interest; historic interest; architectural and artistic interest. The exploration focusses specifically on those interests deemed of possible relevance to the proposals site, and it is not an exhaustive assessment of the inherent heritage interests of the relevant heritage assets. The phrase ‘heritage interests’ is interchangeable with the phrase ‘heritage values’, which was used in Historic England guidance from 2008^v.

Archaeological Interest

- 3.5 Historic England (2019) suggests that “There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.”
- 3.6 Historic mapping shows the site of the Club as farmland before development. It seems unlikely that the site will hold any notable archaeological interest (buried) on account of excavations for past development, however a desk-based assessment of potential archaeology has not been conducted as part of this heritage statement.

Historical Interest

- 3.7 Historic England (2019) suggests this to be - “An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with

historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity".

- 3.8 The former British Legion Club will hold some local historic interest due to its links with the Armed Forces and community use of the building. This interest is not, however, of any notable heritage significance given the recent age of the building and lack of architectural quality.

Architectural and Artistic Interest

- 3.9 Historic England (2019) suggests that: "These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture."
- 3.10 Lying just outside the Conservation Area, the former Club was clearly identified as a building with no heritage interest when the boundary was drawn. It does not compliment the architectural interests of the Conservation Area and provides an unattractive element of the Area's setting, featuring in views out from the Conservation Area along Towneley Road and from within Towneley Gardens. Modern houses to the east of the Club and the Towneley House development to the south are also non-complimentary features of the Conservation Area, and the visual qualities of the Area in the vicinity of the Club are very much curtailed by 1960s buildings.
- 3.11 Towneley Gardens provide an attractive green space in the heart of the town and contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the Conservation Area. The positive features of note include the lawned areas, mature trees and planned layout of the open space.

Statement of Significance

- 3.12 Having assessed the heritage interests associated with the site, it is now possible to take a more informed approach to the assessment of site significance. This will consider prioritising conservation in light of the proposals for change. In this context, a statement of significance is given below.
- 3.13 An appraisal of heritage interests has been conducted to explore to what extent the vacant former British Legion Club contributes to the heritage significances of the Longridge Conservation Area, as a feature of the Area's setting lying outside the Area's southern boundary. The principle finding is that the former Club is a negative feature of the

Conservation Area's setting. This is principally due to the building's lack of architectural quality, and it is abundantly clear that the Conservation Area boundary was drawn to exclude the building and other 1960s developments in the vicinity owing to their lack of architectural and historic interest.

- 3.14 Owing to this lack of heritage interest and negative impact upon the Conservation Area, redevelopment of the Club provides an opportunity for localised enhancement of the Area. This would accord with the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990, wherein local planning authorities have a duty either preserve or enhance the special interests of conservation areas through the development management process. In terms of the NPPF, this equates to conserving heritage significance, mindful that some degree of harm may be acceptable under the NPPF should the proposals promise sufficient benefits to outweigh the harm.
- 3.15 In summary, redevelopment of the site offers the opportunity for enhancement and this can be readily achieved through the design of a building which offers an improved visual impact when compared with the existing Club. This specifically relates to how the replacement building contributes to the setting of the Conservation Area, mindful that at present the contribution made by the Club is negative. In terms of how impact is measured, this will most specifically related to views into and out of the Conservation Area, particularly in the vicinity of Towneley Gardens and Towneley Road.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSALS

General Principles

- 4.1 General guidance on assessing proposed changes to heritage assets is given in chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019). The NPPF establishes the premise that conserving significance should be a guiding principle when designing proposals for any development. In order to do this, it is first necessary to understand the heritage significance(s) of heritage assets before commencing with design.
- 4.2 Part 3 of this statement fulfils the need to understand significance and the findings of part 3 have informed the design of the proposals. There follows, here in section 4, an objective review of the finalised scheme, verifying to what extent conservation of significance has been achieved or whether any harm is likely to accrue.

Summary of the Proposals

- 4.3 The proposals involve redeveloping the site of the former Club with a new apartment building. The new building is L-shaped in plan and extends onto land immediately east of the existing Club building: this land is part of the site ownership and encroaches just into the Conservation Area.
- 4.4 The proposed building is two storeys in height plus attic level rooms. It will be slightly higher than the new row of houses built immediately to the north on the west side of Towneley Road. The building will adopt a mixed palette of exterior materials including panels of stone and render cladding with a metal clad pitched roof and attic dormers. The variation in materials reduces the sense of massing, whilst bringing increased visual interest and, through the use of stone, harmonising with traditional materials found within the neighbouring Conservation Area. The design of the building also provides a transitional link between the lower domestic scale and character of the houses on Towneley Road and the larger apartment developments to the south.
- 4.5 A series of illustrations showing the visual appearance of the building from various directions is given below, including photo montages which offer a clear depiction of how the building will look in its local context, most specifically from Towneley Road and Towneley Gardens.



Figure 12) View from the south



Figure 13) View from the former bowling green



Figure 14) View from Towneley Road



Figure 15) View across the bowling green (view from within the Conservation Area)



Figure 16) View along Towneley Road from the south

Analysis of the Proposals: National Planning Policy Framework

4.6 As discussed earlier, section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF (2019) considers heritage planning and identifies the following key drivers in the decision making process:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

4.7 The NPPF unifies the overall approach to planning, in order to ensure that deliberations over decisions relating to heritage assets are made in the full planning context. Securing sustainable development is the primary driver of the NPPF: in the heritage context this relies on maintaining active use (long term) in a manner that seeks to limit potential harm to significance.

NPPF Paragraph 193

4.8 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

- 4.9 Parts 2 and 3 of this heritage statement acknowledge the need to explore and understand heritage significances in order to guide proposals for change and review likely impacts, all as outlined within the NPPF. On the matter of whether any harm to significance accrues, this is discussed in the passages below with specific focus on harm as it might stem from development within the setting of the Conservation Area.

NPPF Paragraph 195

- 4.10 Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states:

“Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.”*

- 4.11 Paragraph 195 of the NPPF considers the circumstances where total loss or substantial harm to significance of a designated heritage asset might accrue on account of a development proposal. In this case, as the proposals have no direct physical impact on any designated heritage assets beyond slight encroachment onto a grassed area on the outer edge of the Conservation Area, there is no reasonable or appreciable risk of substantial harm or total loss of significance.

NPPF Paragraph 196

- 4.12 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states:

“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

- 4.13 The potential risk of less than substantial harm to significance of a designated heritage asset, as referred to in paragraph 196 of the NPPF, could only theoretically arise in this case should the proposed redevelopment of the former Club site alter the setting of the Conservation Area in a manner that reduced the Area's significance. This is mindful that the development does slightly encroach into the Area, but that the encroachment is on land right at the periphery of the Area which, like the site of the Club, is experienced as a feature of setting.
- 4.14 As identified earlier in Section 3, the existing building on the site asserts a negative impact and is therefore not a positive contributor to either the setting or significance of the Conservation Area. Accordingly, an opportunity for enhancement exists. In assessing whether the proposals take this opportunity, a comparison of the qualities of the proposed building and those of the existing building is a sound basis for making a judgement.
- 4.15 Whereas the appreciation of the architectural qualities of any building is essentially a subjective issue, it is reasonable to state that in this instance the proposed building possesses an improved visual appearance and architectural character to its predecessor. The new development has been designed to add visual interest to the locality, whilst reflecting some of the material character and scale of its neighbours, including the new housing to the north and 1960s developments to the west and south. The proposals do not represent a pastiche copy of the older buildings within the adjacent Conservation Area, but instead adopt a contemporary design which has been inspired as much by the place as it has by architectural fashion. Therein it is undoubtedly a building of its time, but one which also respects its context, which in this instance is a context characterised by buildings of varying ages, scales and styles.
- 4.16 The Longridge Conservation Area Management Guidance document (2006), although perhaps now somewhat outdated in its references to and interpretation of policy, provides a series of design criteria, whilst making it clear that in some locations contemporary design will be appropriate. The site in question would appear to be one such location, given that it is surrounded by modern buildings and therefore is detached from the traditional buildings which characterised the architectural interests of the Area. The aforementioned design criteria is summarised below:
- 4.17 *All new development should seek to:*
- *Achieve continuity in the street frontage building line, usually set on the back edge of the pavement;*
 - *Maintain the historic pattern of development by respecting the historic grain associated with historic plots and the historic morphology of development in the immediate area;*

- *Complement the human scale, height and massing of historic development in the immediate streetscape and the wider conservation area;*
- *Reflect the proportion of solid to void found in the elevations of traditional buildings and employ robust detailing, avoiding fussy or gimmicky use of applied features or detailing;*
- *Respect the historic hierarchy of development and detailing between principal and secondary street frontages and within plots between frontage and rear elevations;*
- *Conceal any parking or servicing areas behind built frontages of appropriate scale;*
- *Reinforce local identity by the use of the traditional materials used in the conservation area;*
- *Re-use traditional buildings which contribute to townscape quality.*

4.18 This guidance has been followed in developing the design of the new building, with the proposals adhering to the requirements related to street frontage, morphology, scale, appearance, use of traditional materials and hierarchy. However, since the building is of contemporary design with traditional elements, it does not entirely follow all of the criteria, having adopted an appearance which is intended to enhance the locale rather than merely blend in.

4.19 As previously highlighted, the NPPF establishes a set of key drivers for planning and the historic environment, which includes due consideration of “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”. Herein the NPPF acknowledges the positive impacts that can accrue through new development, particularly in circumstances where existing development asserts a negative impact. In this case, an objective and reasonable assessment of the proposals would deduce that the new apartment block should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, and will at the very least represent a marked improvement on what currently exists.

4.20 In addition to the subjective matter of aesthetics, there is the very objective issue of building use, which in this instance relates to the provision of new residential accommodation in place of the vacant former Club building. Herein there is again a very compelling argument that the proposals improve and enhance the usage of the land, and promise public benefits that are environmental (visual appearance), social (new housing) and economic (job creation) in nature.

4.21 In conclusion, and with specific reference to the comparison of the new building on the existing building, there appears a very reasonable and coherent case in favour of the proposals. This case relates to the improved visual appearance of the site, the sustainable new use for the site, the promise of localised enhancement for the Conservation Area’s setting and the economic benefit associated with the business investment and job creation.

Analysis of the Proposals: Local Heritage Planning Policy

4.22 Local planning policy effectively follows, as it must legally do, the policy requirements of the NPPF, therefore separate consideration of local policy in the heritage planning context is not deemed necessary.

5 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This heritage statement has been prepared to assess the potential impact of the proposed redevelopment of the site of the vacant former British Legion Club on Towneley Road, Longridge with a new apartment block. The statement specifically investigates whether the proposals would harm the heritage significances of the Longridge Conservation Area, adjacent to which the proposal site is situated (albeit part of the site encroaches into the Area).
- 5.2 The initial findings are that the existing building on the site asserts a negative impact upon the Conservation Area, and was specifically excluded from the Area when the boundary was drawn. Redevelopment of the site therefore offers the opportunity to enhance the Conservation Area by changing this specific element of its setting.
- 5.3 Mindful of this opportunity to enhance, the statement goes on to compare the impact of the existing Club building with the likely impact of the replacement apartment block. This comparison study reveals a compelling case for the proposed new building, as it will represent a marked improvement on what currently exists in both an aesthetic and functional sense.
- 5.4 Accordingly, and on the question of whether the proposals are likely to cause harm to heritage significance, the findings of the statement are that no harm will accrue and enhancement is the most likely outcome. This is partly because the replacement building has been sensitively designed to respond to its local context - a context which is as much characterised by modern development as it is the adjacent green space of Towneley Gardens within the Conservation Area - and partly because it provides new dwellings in a location that is currently unused.
- 5.5 In conclusion, and based upon an objective and reasonable assessment, there would appear no appreciable case to suggest that the proposed development would result in harm to heritage significance. Indeed, there are compelling reasons to believe the converse is true, namely that the proposals will result in net enhancement of the Conservation Area whilst promising other public benefits.

ⁱ Clarke, K, *Informed Conservation*, Historic England 2003

ⁱⁱ Historic England, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

ⁱⁱⁱ Historic England, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

^{iv} Historic England Advice Note 12 (2019) *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets*

^v Historic England, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008