

16-18 Lowergate, Clitheroe, Lancs. BB7 1AD



Full Planning Permission for the change of use from church, shop and ancillary accommodation to three, one bedroomed dwellings, including external alterations to the building.

Planning, Design and Access Statement April 2024
JDTPL 471

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF A FULL APPLICATION FOR THE CHANGE OF USE FROM CHURCH, SHOP AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION TO THREE, ONE BEDROOMED DWELLINGS INCLUDING EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO THE BUILDING AT 16-18 LOWERGATE, CLITHEROE.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Judith Douglas Town Planning Ltd on behalf of the applicant in support of a full planning application for the renovation of the building and its conversion to 3 one bedroomed apartments including alterations to the exterior.
- 1.2 This Statement describes the application site, the proposed development and assesses its merits against the relevant up-to-date policies of the development plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and all other relevant material considerations.
- 1.3 It demonstrates that the proposed development is in accordance with the relevant policies of the adopted Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2014) and also accords with Government policy and guidance as detailed within the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).
- 1.4 The Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying information:

Ordnance Survey Location Plan A1.6

Existing floor plans PHA/840 A1.1

Existing elevations PHA/840 A1.2

Proposed floor plan PHA/840 A1.3

Proposed apartments PHA/840 A1.4

Proposed elevations PHA/840 A1.5

Bat Survey

Heritage Assessment

2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site comprises a traditional terraced two storey property on the corner of King Lane and Lowergate. The building has three display windows on the ground floor and is finished in white painted render and has a blue slate roof.

- 2.2 The property has been unoccupied for three years. The last occupants were the Salvation Army who used the building as a place of worship, charity shop and ancillary accommodation. The Salvation Army now occupy the building opposite on Lowergate. Small, terraced cottages 23 King Lane and 14 Lowergate are attached to the western and eastern sides of the property.
- 2.3 The immediately surrounding properties are predominantly terraced cottages but the site is close to the town centre with its shops, commercial, community and cultural services, bus services and the railway station. There are parking restrictions outside the building.



Figure 1 – HEDPD proposals map extract. Site denoted by blue star

- 2.4 As figure 1 above shows, the site is within the settlement boundary of Clitheroe, inside the main centre boundary, inside the conservation area, but outside the Principal Shopping Frontage. The building is not a listed building but is designated as a building of townscape merit in the Clitheroe Conservation Area Appraisal Map as are its neighbours. The properties 23, 25, 33 and 35 Lowergate opposite the site are listed buildings with the new Salvation Army building being a building of townscape merit.

3.0 SITE HISTORY

- 3.1 The Council's online planning register indicates that there have been no recent previous planning applications at the site.

4.0 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

- 4.1 The applicant has engaged in pre-application discussions with the Council reference 24/ENQ 00014. This confirmed that the development in principle is acceptable and confirms with the Council's Policies in the Core Strategy. Specifically, the proposed residential development fully aligns with Policy DMG2(1) and Key Statement DS1 being housing development within a principal settlement. In regard to loss of employment, only a small area of shop will be lost as a result of the development. Overall, there is likely to be a benefit through the provision of residential units and the loss of a negligible amount of employment generating floorspace is outweighed by this benefit. The building has several uses within it. In regard to the loss of community facilities it was concluded that the worship space and prayer room is atypical of such facilities and the loss of this community facility is regarded as not being significantly in conflict with policy EC2.
- 4.2 In relation to design the proposal in general was considered to be acceptable including the replacement of the shop fronts creating a more domestic appearance which will visually harmonise with the adjacent built form. Concerns were raised in regard to the design of the refuse storage doors and the internal layout of the apartments. We have discussed the refuse storage requirements with the Council's Head of Engineering Services and agreed alternative provision. The internal layout had been reviewed and resolved.

5.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 It is proposed to change the use of the property from a mixed use as a place of worship, shop and ancillary accommodation to three dwelling houses within Use Class C3 of the Town and County Planning Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended). The proposal also involves alterations to the exterior of the building. This comprises, replacing the display windows on the ground floor with domestic scale windows to match the pattern of window openings above. Renewing of the existing doors, windows and render, removal of shop signage and insertion of rooflights.

6.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 refers to the development plan as a whole and requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the relevant parts of the development plan comprise the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

6.2 The following policies of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy ('the Core Strategy') are relevant to the determination of this application:

- **Key Statement DS1** – outlines the Council's development strategy with regard to housing, employment, retail and leisure.
- **Key Statement DS2** – confirms that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach which reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Wherever possible, it will aim to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.
- **Key Statement EN5** – seeks to conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings within the Borough.
- **Policy DMG1** - sets out various criteria to be considered in assessing planning applications, including the proposed development being sympathetic to existing land uses, highway safety and not adversely affecting the amenities of the area.
- **Policy DMG2** – confirms that new development should be in accordance with the Core Strategy development strategy and should support the spatial vision.
- **Policy DME2** - requires development to protect the landscape and townscape including elements such as scale, form and materials that contribute to the characteristic townscapes of the area and the protection of trees.
- **Policy DME3**-requires development to avoid adversely affecting wildlife species protected by law and harm to recognised habitats.
- **Policy DME4** – expands on the requirements of Policy EN5 with regard to heritage assets.

6.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) ('the Framework') sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It requires local planning authorities to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development which means, as paragraph 11c explains, that development which accords with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

6.4 In determining planning applications, paragraph 38 of the Framework expects local planning authorities to approach decisions in a positive and creative way. They should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

7 PLANNING POLICY AND EVALUTION

Principle of the development

7.1 “The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development” is the opening statement of section 2 of the Framework.

7.2 The three overarching objectives of sustainable development are:

“a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

Core Strategy

Principle of development

7.3 The site is within the main town centre of Clitheroe. Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy focuses new housing development to the strategic site on the outskirts of Clitheroe and the principal settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. The creation of three new dwelling on the site is in accordance with Key Statement DS1. The proposed development will contribute to this requirement and provide dwellings in a highly sustainable location in line with Key Statement DS2: Presumption in favour of suitable development, DMG2: Strategic Considerations and the NPPF.

7.4 The property has been vacant for over three years since the Salvation Army moved to their new premises opposite in 2019. The Salvation Army website states that it occupied the Lowergate building for 50 years. In its current form, the majority of the building was last used

as a place of worship with a large worship space on the ground floor and a prayer room and ancillary accommodation at the first floor. The charity shop comprises a much smaller room on the ground floor. An internal room on the ground floor was used as storage for the shop to receive and sort donated goods for the shop. This space was also as circulation space to the rest of the accommodation and provided access to the first floor. Given that the site is currently a mixed use predominantly as a place of worship which is interconnected internally, the shop area is very limited and the neighbouring properties are in residential use, the change of use to a wholly residential use is appropriate in this location. The site is not part of the principal shopping street as defined by policy DMR1: Retail Development in Clitheroe.

Residential development in a sustainable location

- 7.5 The location of the proposed residential units in the town centre is a highly sustainable location close to all amenities and public transport. A residential use of the property is appropriate as the surrounding properties to each side are in residential use. The creation of the apartments in this town centre location close to public transport and public car parks does not require any off-street parking. The site is close to public open space at the Castle Grounds and all local amenities. The apartments would be highly attractive to people who do not own a car.
- 7.6 The applicant has been in discussion with the Council's Housing Strategy Officer Rachael Stott. She has advised that there is a clear need for affordable single person units in the town centre. It is the applicant's intention to apply for grant to support delivery of the units as affordable rent.
- 7.7 The property has a very small yard to the rear which can only be accessed through the building. This will be allocated to one of the units.

Alteration to a building of townscape merit within the conservation area

- 7.8 Development in conservation areas and within the setting of listed building is acceptable provided that the development conserves and enhances the significance of heritage assets and their settings (Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets). The NPPF at paragraph 197 states

"In determining planning application, local planning authorities should take account of:

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; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness."

- 7.9 The application is accompanied by a Heritage Assessment. The Heritage Appraisal provides a description of the heritage value of the site and its setting. The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets is made clear in paragraph 197 of the NPPF. The building has stood vacant and requires a new use as it is now obsolete from its former use as a place of worship and new facility having been provided close by. Without a new use the building will continue to deteriorate. It is considered that the proposed residential use is the optimum and only viable use for the building. To effect a change of use to dwellings it is necessary to replace the shop display windows and make other alterations to the external appearance of the building.
- 7.10 The proposed changes have been designed sensitively and are the least required to facilitate the conversion of the building to residential use. The refurbishment of the building will have a beneficial impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings. The public benefits of the development are clear. It will provide three much needed one bedroom apartments in the town centre which is a highly sustainable location. The proposal is compliant with the requirements of the NPPF, Key Statement EN5 and policy DME4.



1 Google street view May 2020 1-3 Pimlico Road (cream rendered building).



2 Google street view July 2015 1-3 Pimlico Road

Precedent

- 7.11 Similar developments have been approved close to and with the town centre, within the Clitheroe conservation area and within the setting of nearby listed buildings. As mentioned above the former shops at 1-3 Pimlico Road were granted permission to be converted to dwellings in 2017. This conversion has successfully re-used the building and enhanced the conservation area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.
- 7.12 A less successful scheme was carried out at 82-86 Lowergate. Permission was initially granted for the change of use from two retail units into two self-contained flats reference 3/2012/0163 approved 29.05.2012 after the introduction of the NPPF. The reduction in window size was granted later in 2013 reference 3/2013/0239. The window positions relate poorly to the original first floor window positions and the use of uPVC is inappropriate.

Other matters

- 7.13 A bat survey is submitted with the application which concludes that the site is unlikely to be used by bats. The proposal is compliant with the requirements of policy DME3. The development is below the threshold needed to require biodiversity net gains. The development will not impact upon a priority habitat and impacts less than 25sqm on site habitat and 5m of on-site linear habitat. The site is comprised of a building and small enclosed yard which is completely hard surfaced.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany an application for full planning permission for the renovation of the building and its conversion to 3 one bedroomed apartments including alterations to the exterior.
- 8.2 It demonstrates that the principle of development is wholly compliant with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Ribble Valley Core Strategy with regard to the type and nature of the proposed use.
- 8.3 In addition, no environmental or technical matters have been identified which would weigh against the development. In light of all the issues detailed within this Statement, the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied and the application supported.