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HERITAGE STATEMENT:

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE FOR UPPER FLOORS TO FORM 4 SELF-CONTAINED FLATS.



This heritage statement has been prepared by Peter Hitchen Architects on behalf of the applicant in support of the planning application resubmission for the conversion of the upper floors of 41 and 43 Wellgate to residential use including alterations to the interior and repositioning of the extraction duct for the business on the ground floor.

This statement should be read in conjunction with accompanying information:

- Existing and proposed elevations
- Existing and proposed sections with details
- Existing and proposed floorplan
- Site plan
- Noise assessment
- Extract ducting Information

Location and surrounding area

The Proposed site is located in Clitheroe town centre and is also included as a 'Building of Townscape Merit' within the conservation area. The application site comprises of a traditional 3 story terrace adjacent to the dog and partridge pub. The building has two large display windows on the ground floor and is finished in white render.

The property has been used commercially as a Cantonese restaurant for a number of years. Other than application 3/2023/1011 submitted by the current applicant, there has been no previous planning history. The property is adjoined on its west face to 'the flower shop'.

The immediate surrounding properties are primarily commercial with residential spaces above the businesses. There are parking restrictions at the front of the property.

The building is of three storeys and occupies a plot on Wellgate with a pedestrian passage adjacent. It is of three stories with a pitched slate roof. Its road-facing elevations are rendered and painted, behind which are likely solid rubble masonry walls.

Clitheroe has a rich history dating to at least the Norman period whereupon the castle was originally built by the De Lacy family in the 12th century (possibly earlier) on a rocky outcrop. The castle now overlooks the townscape of Clitheroe of which to the north comprises extant medieval street planform that forms the majority of the Clitheroe Conservation area. As is typical in many historic market towns the roads within the medieval core of Clitheroe retain their historic names such as 'Castle Gate', 'Well Gate' and 'Lower Gate'. The suffix 'gate' is a modern derivation of the old English (or Norse) word for 'street' or 'way'¹.

The building is not listed but does reside within the Clitheroe Conservation Area designated as such for its special architectural or historic interest. However, the building is described as a 'building of townscape merit' for its contribution to the street scene on Wellgate and its historic nature.

HERITAGE APPRAISAL

This section of the report responds to the requirements as set out in paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Under the heading "Proposals Affecting Heritage Assets" is stated the following:

"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.

Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation”.

The overarching aim of this section is to determine the heritage values of any designated heritage asset(s) that may be affected or harmed by the proposals. The appraisal therefore begins by determining any heritage interests that may be associated with the building and other designated assets nearby (heritage asset designations). Archaeological Interests

There is no known archaeological evidence apparent at the site or readily available elsewhere in documented or archived form. Regressive mapping does not indicate that there may be buried remains of interest. There is unlikely any further interest in this regard.

The building has fallen into disuse in recent years and as such is suffering a degree of deterioration to its external elevations. This presents a detraction to architectural interest at present and will only worsen over time if left unattended. Overall, the architectural interests of the building either aesthetically or derived from the rarity of its design are minimal, however the timber windows should be retained (or repaired/ replaced like-for like as far as practicable).

The site resides within the Clitheroe Conservation Area, designated as such for its overall special historic and architectural interest. Therefore, how the site forms a feature within the setting and views of the conservation area is of great importance. Whilst the building does not possess notable heritage values itself, changes to it could affect the significance of the conservation area

The building is set within the medieval core of the town with various phases of historic development apparent nearby from which the building derives the majority of its heritage interest. However, as is apparent when walking on Wellgate there are numerous aesthetic detractions from the street scene that include modern development, vacant buildings, car parks, plastic windows and poor adaptation and conversion of historic buildings. Whilst the building does retain some historic features which are positive contributors to heritage interest the overall condition of its external façade detracts from the street scene visually.

Statement of Significance

41 – 43 Wellgate is a mid-late C19 building that likely replaced an earlier medieval structure. Such redevelopment in the Victorian era is typical and can be seen throughout the town with many other similar buildings nearby. The building was constructed due to the growth of the town and the need to replace smaller, likely overcrowded buildings.

The property has now stood vacant for a number of years and is suffering deterioration to its building fabric. The building retains limited historic details.

The building forms a feature within the surrounding street scene and is visible when looking along Wellgate, either north or south from further away.

As identified in the conservation area appraisal the group of buildings around Wellgate form a cohesive group of historic buildings. However, the worsening condition of the building and poor quality modern alterations on Wellgate detract from the heritage interest of the conservation area in this regard.

Planning Policy Context

The national planning policies regarding heritage assets are contained within the National Planning Policy Framework [2021] specifically section 16 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. The requirements of paragraph 194 are fulfilled by sections 2-3 of this report.

Paragraph 202 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.

The concern here is whether the implementation of the proposals will amount to less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area. This could occur due to the appearance of the proposals and the manner in which they may intrude within views/ setting to an extent that harms heritage significance.

As is well understood and is apparent at 41-43 Wellgate, vacancy and disuse of a building will inevitably lead to further deterioration and harm to the visual appearance of Lowergate. The proposals relate to the alteration of the building to create three residential dwellings. The proposals of concern regarding harm to heritage significance are those to the external façade of the building that are visible from the public domain within the conservation area. Similar conversions are evident around the town and make the best use of what where vacant and obsolete commercial buildings, however a number have been poorly implemented.

The external aesthetic of the building will not be altered. The only alterations are to the side elevation where the extract duct is located away from the windows. Accordingly, the proposals will have little adverse impact on the ability to appreciate the significance of the wider conservation area. The proposed re-rendering of the building and refurbishment of the sliding sash windows, assuming the works are undertaken on a sympathetic basis will improve setting in this regard.

Conclusion

This heritage statement and heritage impact assessment have been produced to determine the extent the proposed alterations at 41-43 Wellgate may harm the heritage significance of the Clitheroe Conservation Area. The report has found that the risk of harm derived from the proposals is minimal and will achieve the optimum viable use of a building that for a number of years has stood vacant and has begun to deteriorate. It is reasonable to suggest that in order to enable the reuse of the building a degree of change is unavoidable. The alterations to the building as presented in this application comprise the minimum required in order to create four residential dwellings. On balance, any doubts that do remain regarding less than substantial harm accruing (as per NPPF para 202) are adequately offset by the wider public benefits of the proposals and the sustainable, adaptive refurbishment of a functionally obsolete and deteriorating building.