

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT STATEMENT TO SUPPORT THE CONSIDERATION OF A PLANNING APPLICATION THAT PROPOSES CHANGE OF USE FROM CLASS E RETAIL TO A SUI GENRIS BAR AND CAFE AT 16 ECCLESTON STREET, PRESCOT. L34 5QE

APPLICATION SITE: MERCUTIOS BAR & CAFÉ 16 ECCLESTON STREET, PRESCOT. L34 5QE

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT: CHANGE OF USE FROM CLASS E RETAIL TO A SUI GENRIS BAR AND CAFE

PLANNING AGENT:- MR MIKE CARR MSc MRTPI DIRECTOR MAT DESGN LIMITED

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1. INTRODUCTION & THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This Heritage Assessment Statement (HAS) has been prepared by MAT Design Limited on behalf of Mercutio's Bar & Café and forms part of the planning application submission to Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (The LPA) that proposes the Change Of Use From Class E Retail To A Sui Genris Bar And Cafe to the lower floor of the building. The upper floor is unaffected by the proposals for the site and there are no external alterations proposed as part of the development

Overall, this HAS when considered in conjunction with the supporting plans will make an assessment as to the significance of a designated heritage asset, if development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm on to heritage asset, then weight this harm against the public benefits of the proposal.

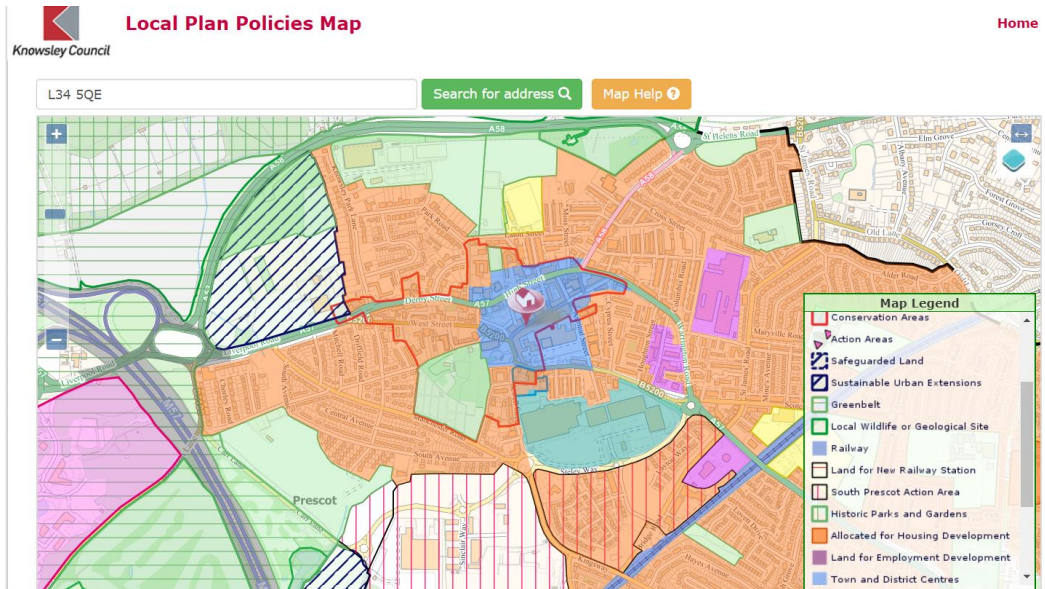
2. THE APPLICAITON SITE & LAND USE DESIGNATION

The application site is the ground floor of a vacant commercial premises located at 16 Eccleston Street, which is located within Prescott Town Centre. Eccleston Street (pedestrianised) provides the sites frontage to the north, a business service yard is located to the south (serving a variety of other premises), whilst an estate agents and a convenience store are located to either side of the premises.

No customer car parking is available for the site, although it is highlighted that there is ample car parking around the Town Centre. Overall, the site can be described as being accessible and in a sustainable location.

In terms of the land use allocation for the site and surrounding area, the Knowsley Local Plan Proposals Map identifies that the site is in the Prescott Town Centre (shaded blue) and is also located within the Prescott Town

Centre Conservation Area. The same allocations plan shows that there are no other constraints such as protected trees or ecological considerations.



Map source – Knowsley Local Plan Proposals Map

Image 1 – Source Google Maps

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development involves the change of use of the ground floor of the premises from its lawful use under use Class E, to a new Sui Genris use comprising of a bar and café. Whilst minor internal alterations are proposed as part of the development, there are no structural or external alterations that would affect the appearance of the building or affect its setting within Prescott Town Centre or the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There are no current planning applications that affect the consideration of the proposals for the site.

5. HERITAGE ASSESSMENT PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Act of Parliament, along with the National and Local Planning Policies that directs the consideration of the planning and the Listed Building Consent applications, is made up of the following framework:-

- **Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**, which requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of a conservation area;
- **Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment)** sets out the most up to date planning guidance in relation to development opportunities that affect heritage assets, with paragraph 184 advising that:-

“Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value.

These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”.

Further to the above, NPPF paragraphs 189 - 191 provide advice in relation to proposals affecting heritage assets, with paragraph 192 setting out 3 primary considerations in determining applications. Those considerations are:-

- 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.

In addition, NPPF paragraphs 192 - 201 provide advice in relation to the consideration potential impacts, which generally reflect the concept of preservation and/or enhancement of the heritage asset, as identified in The Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, whilst paragraph 202 sets out that Local Planning Authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the dis-benefits of departing from those policies and;

- ***The Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy 2016*** provides the adopted local policy framework against which the proposals for this site are to be considered against.

Whilst the wording and some of the provisions that are set out in Section 16 of the 2021 NPPF supersede some elements of the - ***The Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy 2016***, the following policies carry considerable weight in the determination of planning and listed building consent applications, along with planning applications that may affect the setting of any heritage asset, such as St Pauls Court (Church).

The relevant policies in this case are identified as:-

Local Plan Policy CS 20 - Managing the Borough's Historic Environment. Policy

In dealing with new development proposals in Knowsley, developments that affect heritage assets should preserve or enhance the borough's historic and architectural assets, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and archaeological remains, together with other local areas, buildings and structures of historic importance.

CS 20 sets out that the Council :-

- a) Require preservation of the local distinctiveness and character of historic assets through sensitive design of new development, including appropriate integration with their setting and immediate landscape;
- b) Prevent demolition and/or development which would result in substantial harm or the loss of a designated historic asset or its setting, unless the proposal would result in substantial public benefits which clearly outweigh the harm or loss;
- c) Where a development proposal will result in less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset or its setting, assess such harm against the benefits of the proposal;
- d) Facilitate long term conservation and enhancement of local assets and areas of historic importance, including through the preparation of Conservation Area Management Plans.

This HAS reflects the provisions of Local Plan Policy CS 20 and the directions of Section 16 of the NPPF 2021.

6. THE HERITAGE ASSET

This application site is located within the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset, for the purposes of this heritage assessment.

7. HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

7.1 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT/THE AFFECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development is described earlier in this statement at section 3, and identifies that a vacant commercial premises will be brought back into use as a bar and café. The proposed use would allow the ground floor of the building to operate in an economically and viable way, adding vitality to this part of the Town Centre through increased foot fall throughout the day.

In terms of the impacts of the proposed development in the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area, the proposals for the site would, given that there are no external alterations proposed, both preserve and enhance the Conservation Area.

7.2 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

Due to scale and effects of the proposed development on the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area, it is considered that the proposed development's harm to the significance of the heritage asset are minimal, thereby resulting in less than substantial harm.

Taking this into account, paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises that any harm that is caused by the development, must then be balanced against the public benefit of the proposal.

In this case, and in terms of the planning balance, the proposed development would allow the reopening of this building for a positive commercial use, which would in turn would contribute to the vitality and viability of this part of Prescott Town Centre. It is therefore considered that these public benefits outweigh the less than substantial harm that is caused by the development to the heritage asset.

Overall, and when considering the above mentioned factors, the conclusions of this heritage assessment are that the proposed development complies with the provisions set out in legislation, Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Knowsley Local plan Core Strategy.

As such, the proposals are considered to be a sustainable form of development, as described in paragraph 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.