

HERITAGE STATEMENT THE HAMLETS, WEST STREET, PRESCOT

Prepared by



Heritage Statement: The Hamlets, West Street

Document Control	
Job Number	
Document Version	Final
Date	February 2025
Client	The Hamlet's Avenues

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On behalf of the Applicant, this Heritage Statement has been prepared by Greyside Planning in request for full planning permission for the proposed change of use to a children's care home (Class C2) and the installation of a pedestrian and vehicular gate to the entrance from West Street.
- 1.2 This Statement is intended to assist the Local Planning Authority and stakeholders in understanding the application site and development proposals, the prevailing planning policy framework and compliance of the proposals with it and the key issues that argue for the granting of planning permission for the proposed development. In developing these proposals, full regard has been given to the provision of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2.0 APPLICATION SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The application site consists of The Hamlets, West Street, Prescott. The Hamlets consists of Woodcroft House, a 1860s 5 bedroom detached villa which was previously known as Highfield House and 7 newly constructed dwellings. The site is accessed from West Street, a predominantly residential street close to the centre of Prescott. The site is located within the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Details of the planning history of the site have been reviewed on Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council's Planning Explorer website, the findings of which are set out in Table 1 below.

Application No.	Description of Development	Decision
18/00765/FUL	DEMOLITION OF 2 STOREY BUILDING, TIMBER CLAD BUILDING, RECEPTION BUILDING AND PRE-FABRICATED OFFICE BUILDING, CONVERSION OF VICTORIAN BUILDING TO FORM 1 NO. FIVE BED DWELLING AND ERECTION OF 7 NO. TWO STOREY DWELLINGS, TOGETHER WITH	

	VEHICULAR/PEDESTRIAN ACCESSES, LANDSCAPING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS	
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Table 1: Planning History

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 We are seeking permission for the following proposed development:

The proposed change of use to a children's care home (Class C2) and the installation of a pedestrian and vehicular gate to the entrance from West Street.

5.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

5.1 Section 72 of 'The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990' states that in the exercise of planning functions with respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. This establishes the Development Plan as the primary decision-making document when considering planning applications (s.38(6)).

5.2 The Development Plans for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council comprise of the following documents:

- Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy.

Locally, the LPA's policy guidance is contained within the adopted Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, (formally adopted in January 2016). Whilst the application will be assessed directly against numerous adopted policies, it is considered that Policy CS20 is highly relevant and as such carries significant weight.

Core Strategy Policy CS20 intends to secure appropriate integration of development with Knowsley's heritage assets and provide a positive approach to their future management to safeguard their preservation.

The part one of the policy states that:

"Development proposals in Knowsley should preserve or enhance the borough's historic and architectural assets, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and archaeological remains. The Council will:

- 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."*

Part two of The policy states:

"The re-use of vacant and underused historic assets will be encouraged, with favourable consideration given, where appropriate, to proposals which will:

- a) Enable a use for a purpose sympathetic to its conservation;*
- b) Retain or introduce public access; and*

c) Enhance the importance of the asset for local tourism, leisure or the economy."

Part three of the policy states:

"Development proposals on sites which include, or are considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets or comprising archaeological interest, should be accompanied by a heritage impact statement."

Part four of the Policy states:

"Locally important historic assets which are not subject to statutory designation will be identified in a local list and will be afforded consideration in the decision-making process."

The Design Quality in New Development Supplementary Planning Document (formally adopted in January 2016) identifies the overarching context for design in the Borough, and highlights Boroughwide issues which should be taken into account in designing new development, including guidance relating to preserving the built heritage.

The building lies within Prescot Town Conservation Area. A Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan were adopted in 2012.

- 5.3 Other material considerations include (but are not limited to), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 and any relevant adopted Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance.

Paragraph 195 of the NPPF lays out that heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites. It states that these assets are irreplaceable 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. Significance is defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

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‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.’

In determining applications, the NPPF advises that the local planning authority should take account of positives associated with the heritage asset and that the more important a heritage asset, the greater weight that should be given to the protection of its significances. It also outlines the approach that local planning authorities should take when determining applications. The following paragraphs are relevant:

Paragraph 200 states:

‘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.’

Paragraph 203 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

‘The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’.

Furthermore, Paragraph 205 advises that:

‘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.'

6.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

- 6.1 Woodcroft first appears on the 1890 OS Map but can be dated back to circa 1860. It originally appears as “Higherfield House”, a name taken from the field in which it was built. The house was built set back from the road and separated by extensive gardens. The 1890 Prescott Town Plan (Fig 1) shows the site in detail. The entrance gate from West Street can be seen to lead to a series of driveways and paths, a turning circle for carriages, planted formal gardens and expansive glass houses. There is also what appears to be a pedestrian entrance leading from The Wood, the street to the south of the site.



Figure 1: 1890 Prescott Town Plan © National Library of Scotland 2025

- 6.2 By the early 20th century, the house had been renamed Woodcroft. It was owned by Lancashire County Council in the mid-twentieth century with ownership passing to Knowsley Council in 1974. The house and grounds were used for local government offices throughout this period. In 2018 a planning application was submitted for the

change of use of the now vacant Woodcroft to a five bedroom dwelling and the construction of 7 two storey dwellings within its grounds.

- 6.3 The application site sits within the Prescot Town Centre Conservation Area. There are a high number of historic buildings which are considered to make a 'positive' contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area, including two churches, a 19th century commercial office and a number of cottages and town houses, with good groups in Atherton Road, Eccleston Street, Market Place and Derby Street. The Conservation Area covers the town centre and of Prescot and residential streets close to the town centre. West Street itself is characterised by the mature trees which line both sides of the street and high quality late 19th and early 20th century houses. There are also a number of more modern buildings.
- 6.4 Close to the site there are a number of listed buildings. The nearest to the site is the Grade II Listed Church of Our Lady Immaculate. Whilst glimpses of the church can be seen from West Street, it predominantly faces Vicarage Place to the east.
- 6.5 Woodcroft contributes positively to the wider conservation area and due to its age, it can in its own right be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT AND APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The application is for the change of use of the site to be used as a children's home, alongside the installation of a pedestrian and vehicular gate to the entrance driveway from West Street.
- 7.2 The change of use of the site to that of a children's home would require no external alterations to Woodcroft or to the seven newly built houses on site. The use of the site as a children's home would secure a long term use for Woodcroft and the wider site. The site will remain to be used as housing. The proposed use of the site will not impact on the character and appearance of the Prescot Town Conservation Area.
- 7.3 Historic maps show that there was an entrance gate to the West Street driveway leading to Higherfield House. Google street view (Figure 2) shows that a gate was at this entrance until at least 2020. The gate to the entrance from West Street is

proposed to be of black metal and has been informed by the gate which was previously on site, taking cues from the Victorian setting and character of West Street.



Figure 2: Previous gate from West Street as seen from Google Street view in October 2020 ©
Google

- 7.4 Due to its proximity to the site and the nature of the proposal it is not considered that the application would have any impact on the special interest of the Grade II Listed Church of our Lady of Sorrows.

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Overall, the proposals are considered to preserve the special character and appearance of the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area. The proposals also offer the opportunity to improve the area. It is considered that the proposals comply with policy CS20 of the Knowsley Local Plan together with relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.