



AN48 HERITAGE STATEMENT

Land at 2-4 Chapel Street, Prescott, L34 5QH

Rev - _10.07.23

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning permission application. The application relates to the proposed erection of 5no. apartments on land at Chapel Street, Prescott.
- 1.2. In preparing this Heritage Statement, regard has been paid to the advice in Para's 189 and 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019:
- 1.3. 189. 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...
- 1.4. 190. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 1.5. The proposal therefore has the potential to have an impact on the heritage significance of the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset.

2. Site Location and Description

Location and Characteristics

- 2.1. The Site lies within the administrative area of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 2.2. Prescott lies approx. 8 miles E of Liverpool city centre. It has a small historic town centre, which is focussed on the Church of St Mary and the more modern Cables Retail Park to the SW. It is surrounded predominantly by areas of high density, low-rise houses of the late 19th and 20th Cs.
- 2.3. The Site fronts onto Chapel Street in the town centre of Prescott and comprises 174m² of unused brownfield land.
- 2.4. The Site shares a boundary with 75 Eccleston Street, a mixed-use property with retail space and shopfront at ground floor and assumed residential use at first floor level.
- 2.5. The site is within the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 2.6. There are no public rights of way across the Site.

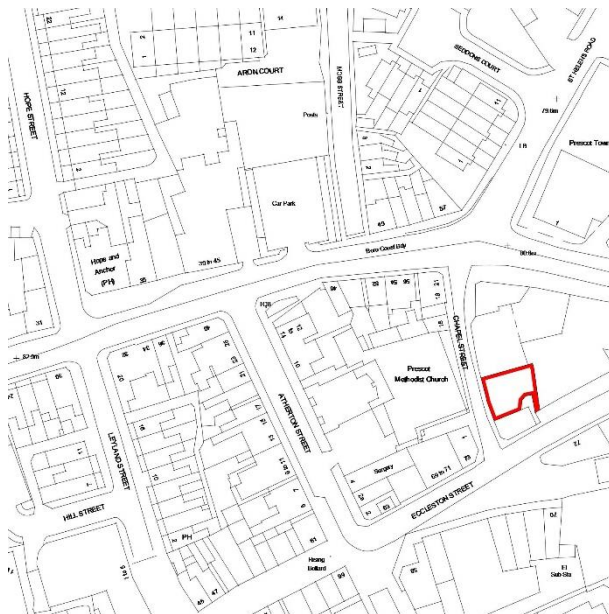


Figure 1: Location Plan

Site Description

- 2.7. The proposed site lies within the boundary of the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area. Situated to the eastern half of this Conservation Area, there are the remains of the medieval street layout, as defined by Eccleston Street and High Street and the narrow alleyways which run between them. Chapel Street is one of these.
- 2.8. The Site is located to the northeast of the town centre and the area contains some attractive historic buildings but suffers from indistinct connections between the town centre and residential areas to the north and east.
- 2.9. The buildings in this region of the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area are two or three storey buildings, built in a terraced form, although the Conservation Area does also include several prestigious brick houses dating to the Georgian period. The largest building is the 17th Century grade I listed St Mary's Church, with the Roman Catholic church (which is located close by). The site is near several listed buildings, the closest being 37 High Street and 17 Atherton Street.

3. History

- 3.1. Prescott was a major point along the route which split into two on Church Street; one to St. Helen's (via the High Street and St. Helen's Road), the other to Warrington (via Market Place and Kemble Street). The town sits on a south-facing hill overlooking two streams and is dominated by St Mary's Church (Grade I) the most important historic building in the Conservation Area.
- 3.2. The accessibility of rich seams of coal close to the surface was mined from the early sixteenth century. Much of the coal produced was destined for Liverpool. It is understood that in 1746 a Newcomen Engine was installed, between Hall Lane (now High Street) and Warrington Road area, to pump-out water from the mine. The mine continued to prosper until the construction of the Sankey Canal in 1767 which broke the town's monopoly on the supply of coal to the Liverpool.
- 3.3. Pevsner's Lancashire: Liverpool and the South West describes Prescott:

Prescot was the centre of an ancient, very large parish that stretched from Rainford in the N to the Mersey in the S. The old market town on its hill grew prosperous in the 17th and 18th Cs by supplying Liverpool with coal and, especially, from the mid 18th C, by clock-, watch-, and tool-making. Coal was transported along a turnpike opened in 1726. This was extended to

Wigan, Warrington and beyond in the mid 18th C. In the 20th C, cable manufacture filled the void left by the collapse of the horological industry. Now Prescott has all but merged with Whiston and Rainhill and lies just beyond the suburbs of Liverpool.

- 3.4. The Prescott Conservation Area Appraisal (PCAA) provides a detailed account of the growth of Prescott, stating that it was first recorded in 1140. It states that;

By the 14th Century the town was simply called Prescott. For most of the 13th Century, the Dacre family owned Prescott Manor, and in 1333, William Dacre, 2nd Baron Dacre, obtained a charter for the holding of a three day market and moveable fair at Prescott, confirming the existence of a settlement. It goes on to describe its development in the 16th C: In 1562 the Layton family took over the tenancy of Prescott Hall and rebuilt it as a large 'mansion house'. In 1594 it is recorded that Philip Hayton cut down some of his trees to make a 'railway' to bring coal out of his colliery, an interesting early reference to the use of a railway for an industrialised process. At about this time, in 1592, a map of the area was drawn and confirms that houses were concentrated to the immediate south and east of the church, facing the Market Place, and along Eccleston Street (then called Newgate Street), with a scattering of houses facing what is now High Street.

- 3.5. The town of Prescott is in Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley created as part of the Local Government reorganisation in 1974; it was formerly part of southwest Lancashire.
- 3.6. In recognition of the town's importance and to prevent further deterioration of the town's history two separate conservation areas were first designated (Prescot Church and Prescot High Street). These conservation areas were amalgamated in 1978 to form the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 3.7. The conservation area boundary was adjusted to include Sewell Street and the churchyard area in 1997.
- 3.8. A further boundary review took place as part of the preparation of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal. This recommended adjustment was formally approved in May 2012 as part of the Metropolitan Borough as the Local Planning Authority adopting the Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Management Plan.

- 3.9. The eastern half of the Conservation Area still retains its medieval street layout, as set out by Eccleston Street and High Street and the narrow alleyways which run between them, are of special interest.

4. Relevant Heritage Policies and Legislation

- 4.1. Under the provisions of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Area) Act 1990 Local Planning Authorities have a general duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of their designated conservation areas.

- 4.2. In terms of locally adopted planning policy the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in 2006. In June 2009, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC) 'saved' the majority of the UDP policies under the provisions of the revised system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 4.3. In January 2016 KMBC formally adopted its Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy. The Core Strategy part of the Local Plan sets out the strategic framework for the growth and development of Knowsley up to 2028 and beyond. It also sets out how and where new development and regeneration should take place and is to promote, guide and manage the future development of the borough.

- 4.4. Regarding the management of the historic environment, design quality and sustainability and the provisions of new dwellings within the Borough the proposal will be assessed under the following adopted Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy policies:

- CS2 Development Principles
- CS3 Housing Supply, Delivery and Distribution
- CS14 Principal Regeneration Area – Prescott Town Centre
- CS17 Housing Sizes and Design Standards
- CS19 Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development
- CS20 Managing the Borough's Historic Environment
- CS22 Sustainable and Low Carbon Development

- 4.5. KMBC has acknowledged under the heading 'Historic Significance and Local Distinctiveness' (Para 6.54) of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy that:

"Prescot Town Centre is Knowsley's oldest and the only centre with a significant number of buildings dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Prescot Town Centre has a unique character arising from its history and much of the existing town centre, including the main pedestrian shopping area along Eccleston Street, which is designated as a Conservation Area. These historic assets give the potential to create a strong and positive character and image. However, at present, a large number of buildings in the town centre are in a poor state of repair and the Prescot Shopping Centre, completed in 1988, suffers from a high level of vacancy."

- 4.6. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 that replaced PPS5 - 'Planning for the Historic Environment' was revised in July 2018.

- 4.7. In Section 16 "Conserving and enhancing the historic environment" it states, inter alia:

193. 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.

- 4.8. It advocates that in respect of the conserving and enhancing the historic environment 'significance' can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of a heritage asset or development within its setting. The Heritage asset in this instance is the designated conservation area and as such any change that is likely to cause harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

- 4.9. It is noted that Historic England has published Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning in respect of:

- The Historic Environment in Local Plans
- Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment
- The Setting of Heritage Assets

- 4.10. It is the 3rd of the above advice notes that regard will be given as part of the assessment of the current proposals in conjunction with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.
- 4.11. The historic environment is a shared resource. It contains a unique and dynamic record of human activity and has been shaped by people responding to the surroundings they inherit, and embodies the aspirations, skills and investment of successive generations. Therefore, the following 'principles' aim to provide the foundation for a comprehensive framework for the sustainable management of the historic environment:
- The historic environment is a shared resource.
 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.
 - Understanding the significance of places is vital.
 - Significant places should be managed to sustain their values.
 - Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent.
 - Documenting and learning from decisions are essential.
- 4.12. To understand the significance of Prescot Town Centre Conservation Area it is recognised this part of the historic environment has a distinctive identity perceived by people that can be considered a place.
- 4.13. The significance of this place embraces all the cultural and social heritage values that people associate with it. It is considered by Historic England that these values will tend to grow in strength and complexity over time, as understanding deepens, and people's perceptions of a place evolve.

5. Proposed Development

5.1. The description of development is as follows:

“Erection of 5no. apartments”.

Design Principles

5.2. The key design principles that have influenced the design evolution of the proposed development are:

- Provide an efficient layout and use of the building.
- Provide a design which is reflective of the surrounding characteristics.
- Provide a sensitive design which respects the sites’ location within the Conservation Area.

5.3. Detailed consideration has been given to the scale and appearance of the proposal to ensure that the proposal is of a high-quality and sensitive design.

5.4. The accompanied DAS makes in depth reference to the design and should be read in conjunction with this Heritage Statement.



Figure 2: Proposed street scene from Chapel Street

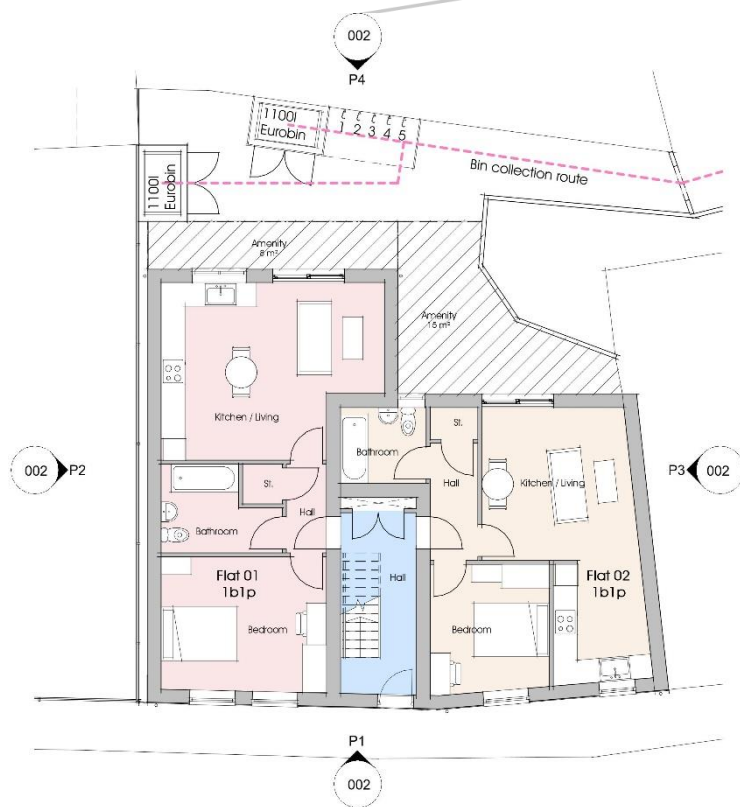


Figure 3: Ground Floor Layout



Figure 4: Proposed external view from Chapel Street

6. Impact Assessment

- 6.1. The significance can be addressed in this instance by the fact that Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council designated Prescott Town Centre as a Conservation Area in 1978 with the boundary being adjusted in November 1997. A further boundary review took place in May 2012.
- 6.2. The designation of such historic places of special architectural or historic character and appearance as conservation areas was taken in this instance to enable planning and management decisions to fully respect the character and appearance of Prescott Town Centre.
- 6.3. It is understood that the introduction of new development will be permitted provided it meets Knowsley MBC's relevant policies pertaining to the design quality and accessibility, the management of the historic environment and the Metropolitan Borough Council's adopted Historic Environment Strategy 2013-2018 which advocates the active process of management of heritage assets, often involving striking a balance between preservation and sympathetic alteration in order to ensure the long term survival of a historic area.
- 6.4. In terms of 'Urban Design Quality and Variety' it is acknowledged from the Borough's published advice that:
- "The historic environment provides locally distinctive design, superior urban design, legible townscapes, mixed use, greater variety of urban forms and quality public realm. It provides a basis for understanding architectural design and urban morphology. It makes a positive contribution to the built environment and creates a stimulus for creative and innovative new designs and styles."*
- 6.5. In terms of adopted Policy CS19 'Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development' it is considered that the proposed development scheme will meet the requirements of Policy CS19 (1a & 1c) in that:
- It responds to the immediate surrounding in a similar manner to that of the existing building in terms of scale, mass, form, layout, alignment, and density of this part of Prescott town centre.
- 6.6. The proposed development scheme will also meet the requirements of Policy CS19 (2a), (2b) & (2c).

- 6.7. Regarding adopted Policy CS20 - 'Managing the Borough's Historic Environment' it is understood that regarding Policy CS20 (1) development proposals should preserve or enhance the borough's historic and architectural assets. In this particular instance, the designated conservation area and that the preservation of the local distinctiveness and character of historic assets through sensitive design of new development, including appropriate integration with their setting Policy CS20 (2) indicates that the Metropolitan Borough Council will encourage development within designated heritage assets, with favourable consideration given, where appropriate, to enable a use for a purpose sympathetic to the conservation of the character of the area.
- 6.8. It is recognised that in dealing with new development proposals, the Metropolitan Borough Council will endeavour to strike a balance between the protection of the built heritage and the need to allow original architecture and buildings to meet the needs of modern businesses and residents.
- 6.9. By virtue of the application site being located within a designated Conservation Area it is recognised that such status ensures that new development is expected to integrate appropriately with the special character of the area.
- 6.10. The proposal will not harmfully affect the Prescott Conservation Area. The proposed Chapel Street Elevation aims to reflect nearby heritage assets through architectural features.
- 6.11. The building will be detailed to a high standard and built mainly in red brick with a slate roof.
- 6.12. The rear of the building can only partially be seen from Eccleston Street and therefore does not have a huge impact on the surrounding area.

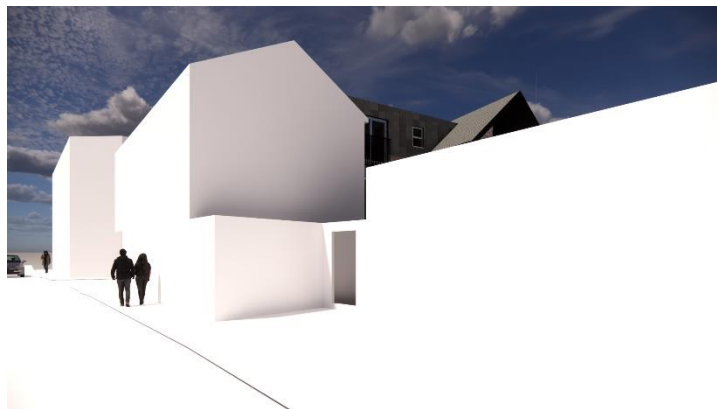


Figure 5: View from Eccleston Street

- 6.13. Setting as defined in the NPPF 2018 is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. The extent of the 'setting' is not fixed and is liable to change as the asset and its surroundings evolve.
- 6.14. The application Site, in its current state, is having a negative effect on the character of the conservation area.
- 6.15. Historic England advocates that:
- "While setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset."*
- 6.16. It is understood that elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, in this instance the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area. The application site in its present arrangement is considered to have negative contribution to the character of the designated conservation area.
- 6.17. The proposed development scheme addresses the above requirements in terms of its appearance, scale and massing which is sympathetic to the heritage asset.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This Heritage Statement makes the case that the current proposals will cause no harm to the heritage significance of the Prescott Conservation Area.
- 7.2. This Heritage Statement provides sufficient information to enable the comprehensive understanding of the proposal on the significance of the Prescott Conservation Area.
- 7.3. In terms of meeting both local and national adopted conservation policies, it is considered that in terms of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy (January 2016) the submitted scheme addresses Policy CS19 'Design Quality and Accessibility' by enhancing the local distinctiveness and identity of this part of the designated Conservation Area.
- 7.4. The proposals respond to and integrate the positive characteristics of immediate surroundings, in terms of local materials, scale, mass, form, layout, alignment and density of the existing built environment.
- 7.5. In terms of enhancing local distinctiveness and identity it is recognised that it is necessary to adopt high standards of design. Creating a positive image for Prescott is vital to encouraging investment and to improve quality of life for residents. Image is strongly influenced by buildings, spaces, and cultural landmarks. The approach taken seeks to reflect positive characteristics of the Conservation Area and adopts the precedence that is displayed by the character and original features of the surrounding buildings.
- 7.6. Regarding Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy (January 2016) Policy CS20 'Managing the Borough's Historic Environment' it is recognised that Development proposals in Knowsley should preserve or enhance the borough's historic and architectural assets and to prevent demolition or development that would result in substantial harm or the loss of a designated historic asset or its setting.
- 7.7. It is acknowledged that the application site has lain vacant and unused for several years. It is apparent from preliminary exchanges of correspondence with the Local Planning Authority that development on this site is likely to be met with favourable consideration given that the proposal is considered to comply with respective parts of adopted Policy CS20.
- 7.8. Conservation Area status ensures that development is expected to integrate appropriately with the special character of the area. It is

acknowledged that the Metropolitan Borough Council has a general presumption in favour of development that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

7.9. In this case the application site has been unused for several years. The design approach to the submitted proposal adopts the Metropolitan Borough Council's aims and objectives in respect of not intending to prevent change or development, but to ensure that where development takes place, it helps to preserve or enhance the special character of the area. As such it is considered the proposals meet locally adopted Policy CS20 for managing the historic environment by:

- Preserving the local distinctiveness and character of historic assets through sensitive design of new development, including appropriate integration with their setting and immediate landscape.
- Prevents development which would result in substantial harm or the loss of a designated historic asset or its setting.
- Will facilitate the long-term conservation and enhancement of local assets and areas of historic importance.

7.10. Regarding Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (NPPF) the proposals are considered to meet the requirements of Paragraph 185 as the local authority has set out its strategy for the protection of the historic environment.

7.11. The NPPF, in Section 16 on *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, provides advice to local authorities on decision-making in respect of proposals which will cause some level of harm but, as the current proposals will cause no harm, that advice does not apply.

7.12. Rather, the advice on *the presumption in favour of sustainable development* in Para. 11 of the NPPF (2019) is more relevant. It states:

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

...For decision-taking this means: ...

c) approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and...

7.13. The submitted documents meet the requirements of Paragraph 189 by describing the significance of any heritage assets affected in relation to its contribution made by the setting. The level of detail is proportionate to the assets' importance and is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance. It is recognised that in relation to Paragraph 192 of the NPPF 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.

7.14. The development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm of the significance of this designated conservation area, this harm has been weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. The optimal value in this instance is to provide the Borough with much needed homes.

7.15. In terms of NPPF Paragraph 200 local authorities are required to look favourably on proposals that will help preserve those elements of the setting that will make a positive contribution to the evolving character of the designated heritage asset. The proposed development scheme will not result in the loss of any historic fabric. However, in terms of setting the following criteria have been used to assess the proposal:

- Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected.
- Assess the degree to which these settings contribute to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated.
- Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it.
- Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.
- Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

7.16. The site has been assessed by using Historic England's techniques pertaining to the 'Zone of Visual Influence' or 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility'. Using the latter, it has been possible to understand the proposed development in relation to the non-designated heritage assets within the designated conservation area to better identify those that may be affected.

- 7.17. This Heritage Statement has demonstrated that the proposal will not materially harm the heritage values of the Prescott Conservation Area. Indeed, this Heritage Statement has demonstrated that some significance of the heritage assets will be reinforced, better conserved and appreciated and that the proposals will have a beneficial impact on the heritage assets.
- 7.18. Should Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority be mindful to approve the current development proposal then it considered that the overall effect on the character of the designated conservation area and the immediate neighbouring buildings will be beneficial and result in less than substantial harm to the significance of Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 7.19. The proposed development scheme will add some contemporary distinctiveness to the character of this part of the conservation area and will integrate within its setting and immediate townscape based on scale and mass of the existing surrounding buildings that adjoin the site.
- 7.20. To conclude, the proposals are seen to accord with the development plan and the relevant advice from Historic England and so this Heritage Statement advocates that the proposals should be approved without delay.