Townscape: Chartered Town Planner & Heritage Consultant Ltd
Unit 1, Carnforth Station
Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 9TR
01524 730382 – info@townscape.org.uk
townscape.org.uk

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HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT – 32 LONG STREET, MIDDLETON, M24 6UQ

Introduction

This brief report is written to provide a professional heritage opinion on a proposed planning application for works to the building known as 32 Long Street, Middleton.



Fig 1 32 Long Lane, Middleton which is to be split into two shop units.

The application site is located centrally to Middleton Town Centre, Long Street which is the corner with Market Place (Assheton Arms). The building is set within an urban setting with adjoining buildings and its outlook is upon a busy road. The building and the immediate surrounding area is made up of commercial properties, characterised by large terraces rising to 2/3 storeys, set within a tight urban grain with little or no frontage or rear amenity spaces. The use of the building is previously that of a foot clinic.

The building itself is 2 storeys constructed in brick to its principal façade and is architecturally and historically unremarkable.. The building dates from very late 19th to early 20th century.

The building is a contributor to the overall character of the Middleton Conservation area and the building reflects the general character of its area with a substantial number of properties set within

a terraced form. It is individual in its size, age, materials and form and further illustrates the historical development of the area. The building has no features of distinction is its façade. Internally the building is both architecturally and historically unremarkable with no elements, fixtures or fitting of interest.

The Middleton Conservation Area

The site is located in the Middleton Conservation Area. An appraisal was prepared for the conservation area in January 2008. The appraisal identifies: the special character of Middleton, the elements that should be retained or enhanced and the detracting elements. It also outlines practical proposals for enhancement of the conservation area. The property is not recognised within the appraisal as a locally listed building or considered to be a contributory building to the character of the conservation area. However, whist I believe the building may have been overlooked in terms of its frontal appearance contributing to the CA, all but the façade has been completely rebuilt and internally reordered in the late 1980s. The building with its distinctive stone facade responds positively to the townscape of the area. The building is adjacent to the listed building - former Manchester and Salford Bank, Grade II by Edgar Wood.

The conservation area appraisal provides an understanding of the areas special interest

From an agricultural background Middleton's population grew extensively over 100 years as a result of first, Georgian period cottage industry (cotton, wool and silk) and secondly, Victorian large scale factory development (cotton and silk) . Middleton, today, has a mixture of retail and manufacturing concerns. It was during the latter half of the eighteenth century that textile manufacturing began to take root as a cottage industry. Yet the form of the area remained largely unchanged and rural.

Middleton's industrialisation evolved from the handloom weaver's workshop, which was adapted to work in either cotton or silk. The practice of weaving originated in the local farms and cottages (largely for woollen goods). As small cotton factories sprang up around the south of the town, speculative plots were purpose built to bring production closer to the main factories, which still operated under the 'putting out' system. This was the process whereby factory spun yarn was handed out to local weavers.

The Conservation area appraisal provides the following commentary in relation to Market Place:

The south-eastern boundary of the conservation area of Market Place and Lodge Street has an imposing mix of Victorian and Edwardian commercial properties which, from a distance, form an asymmetrical skyline of chimneys and gables against a rugged backdrop of the Old Burial

Ground. Moving towards Lodge Street, the space opens up and is dominated by the now derelict Providence Congregational Chapel. It is bounded by a strikingly decorative iron fence. The only such survival of this period in the conservation area. The rear is again dominated by the rising scarp of the Old Burial Ground, which is the highest vantage point in the area. From the top, the views are very good, especially towards the east. On a clear day the distant hills of Bleaklow and Kinder Scout can be seen. Another view is to Tandle Hills, a meeting point in the nineteenth century for militant workers, including the Peterloo demonstrations of 1819, to which Middleton sent a significant contingent.

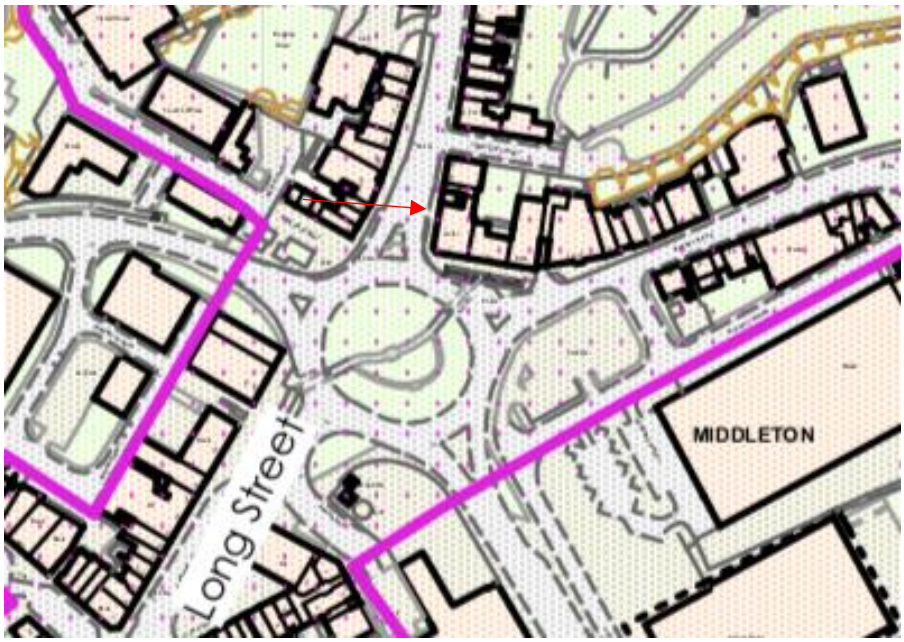


Fig 2 Conservation area map extract, property identified

Description of proposed works

The proposal subject to the planning application is for a partial alterations to the existing shop front with internal alterations only commensurate with the proposed use. There is no proposed change to the principal façade of the building. The works, on the whole are modest in their scale and nature and are wholly self-contained within the structure.

Heritage Impact assessment

In relation to the building itself, it is not a designated heritage asset; its significance is its architectural appearance and its contribution to the character of the conservation area.

This impact assessment relies on the understanding of the property identified that is 32 Long Street which is an unlisted building but within the conservation area. This impact assessment is a judgment on the proposal for works for a change of use. It will discuss the impact of the proposals upon the character of the conservation area and its overall design philosophy. It will

provide a professional judgment on its acceptance and its contribution to the wider setting of the conservation area.

In assessing the impact of a proposal which entails the impact on a heritage asset, this assessment draws on a number of key guiding documents where applicable, such as English Heritage Conservation Principles, 2008 and Historic England Guidance, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 and The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2017; where required. I have also considered the impact of the proposal upon the heritage asset by relating directly to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In this instance given the minor scope of the works, I do not consider that the proposed works will give rise to any undue impact upon either the conservation area or to neighbouring buildings and that a full setting assessment of the proposal is not required.

In determining applications affecting Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, local authorities have to have regard for the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. Policies in the NPPF reinforce the 1990 Planning Act, but use slightly different words and emphasise balancing use, viability and conservation: 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation' The local authority should 'identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets', and 'take account of available evidence and necessary expertise'.

This report provides an appropriate level of significance assessment for this case, 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'. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposal 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be' More weight is therefore given to assets of national importance such as listed buildings, than to local heritage, and more weight should be given to features and elements of high significance than those of lower importance.

Proposals may enhance, have a neutral impact or cause harm to a heritage asset. The level of harm may be slight, 'less than substantial harm' or substantial. The NPPF states that substantial harm to listed buildings (such as demolition or loss) should be exceptional, and it has to be very robustly justified. Where 'less than substantial' harm is likely to be caused, the harm has to be balanced against the public benefits. This level of harm can include removal or covering over of features. In this case the proposal to improve the property with slight change to the shopfront are considered minor works and the level of harm is low, indeed the works proposed make the building and its use more viable and therefore will make a positive impact upon the building and conservation area.

Conclusion

This report has considered the heritage implications of works proposed for minor works to 32 Long Lane. Whilst the works proposed are modest in their scale, they are informed, with an understanding and regard for the heritage asset, its context and significance. The significance of the building and the wider conservation area have been assessed and the resulting impact commented upon.

Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of the significance of any heritage asset and its setting, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.

The heritage assessment provided in this report is carried out in accordance with the historic environment policies in the NPPF and local planning policy and is intended to aid the assessment of any resulting planning application. I have briefly outlined the historical development of the building, its character and significance. I have outlined the scope of the proposed works and commented on the likely impact upon the heritage asset and any mitigating factors.

The crucial test contained within the NPPF is whether the harm to a heritage asset is outweighed by the public interest and benefits of a proposal. There is no negative impact as a result of the proposed works and the resulting impact, if any, will be neutral.

My conclusions have found that the proposed works will result in a neutral/benign impact on the heritage asset of the conservation area. I believe the proposals strike a balance between the architectural and historic interest of the structure, its contribution to the significance of the conservation area and its relationship with other adjacent buildings. The proposal would therefore continue the buildings contribution to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

I conclude that the proposals as set out will not present any detrimental impact or harm upon the designated heritage assets in accordance with national planning policy.

Yours sincerely



Jason Kennedy, BSc,DipTP, MA, MRTPI, IHBC
Townscape: Chartered Town Planning & Heritage Consultant Ltd
Unit 1, Carnforth Station,
Carnforth , Lancashire LA5 9TR