

# HERITAGE & CONSERVATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

## Application Details

### Heritage, Conservation & Design team officer

Catherine Fenghour

### Date

23 January 2026

### Application reference

25/01118/FUL

### Address

Church Inn, Castle Hill Road, Heywood, BL9 6UH

### Proposal

Change of use from public house and restaurant to offices, demolition of previous extensions, new roof with increase in ridge and eaves height, single storey side extension, associated parking, new storage building, new fencing, upgraded landscaping

## Affected Heritage Assets

### Designated heritage assets

- St John the Baptist Church (grade II)

### Non-designated heritage assets

- Church Inn

## Summary

Further information is required in respect of the use and the level of activity proposed and the works to raise the roof of the Inn. Additionally there are concerns regarding the boundary treatments and new buildings proposed and their impact on the rural setting of the public house and grade II listed St John the Baptist's Church.

## Assessment

### Site description and significance

The Church Inn was originally a farmhouse, dating from the mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is depicted on the OS map from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as Malkin. The heritage statement surmises that it was probably still a farm at this point and may have started life as a laithe house. However, by the end

of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was in use as a public house, known as the Church Inn. The public house, Church of St John the Baptist and the former school, would have been the focal point of the rural community.

The Church Inn was extended substantially in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These extensions have partially obscured the front elevation and relate poorly to the proportions and architecture of the host building. Windows have also been replaced and the stonework has been painted. Despite these alterations, the form of the original building remains legible and features survive including chimneys and mullioned windows and the building remains of some architectural interest. It is also of historic interest, owing to its 17<sup>th</sup> century construction and the evidence it provides of the evolution of rural communities. It also holds group value with the nearby grade II listed Church of St John the Baptist. The building has been identified as a non-designated heritage asset for its architectural and historic interest.

To the northwest of the Church Inn lies the grade II listed Church of St John the Baptist. Built in 1845 in rock faced ashlar with a grey slate roof and arched bellcote tower. The list description notes that this church is a relatively early example of ecclesiologically correct Gothic, with exterior simplicity combined with a richer interior being appropriate for its rural site. The Church is listed at grade II for its special architectural and historic interest. Its rural setting contributes positively to its significance and it is still legible as a rural church built to serve residents of this once isolated area.

### **Relevant legislation and planning policy**

Section 66(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – this states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

NPPF chapter 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification (NPPF paragraph 213). 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 impact of a development on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset is a material planning consideration. A balanced judgement should be had, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset (NPPF paragraph 216).

### **Assessment of proposals**

A heritage statement has been provided by the applicant. This includes a detailed account of the Church Inn and its significance. However, the statement does not cover the grade II listed Church of St John the Baptist in any detail. Given the nature of the proposal and the proximity to this listed building, the heritage statement should be updated to set out the history and significance of this listed building.

The proposal is for the conversion of the public house into offices. It includes the raising of the roof, recladding of the existing front extension, a new side extension and the construction of two new

buildings: an amenity building and a plant storage building. New fencing, walls and parking areas are also proposed.

There are no heritage objections to the principle of the former public house being converted to offices, noting that it is currently vacant. However, the proposal also includes a yard for HGV and vehicle store. The level of activity and movements is not known. Historic England guidance makes clear that setting does not solely relate to visual considerations. While they play an important role, other environmental factors are also relevant, including noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity ([The Setting of Heritage Assets](#)). While an office is unlikely to result in a level of activity which would adversely impact on the rural setting of the public house and listed Church, an office with associated yard may generate a level of activity, HGV movements and noise which would degrade the rural setting of these assets. Further information is required in relation to the use and the level of activity and movements likely to be generated so that these impacts can properly be addressed.

The proposed works to raise the roof also include the raising of the existing windows. The supporting statement notes that the roof is beyond repair and needs to be replaced and a structural report has also been provided, which confirms this. Nevertheless, clarification is needed on the proposed roof increase, as the supporting planning statement gives three different figures (0.8m, 0.9m and 1m). The increase should also be shown clearly on the proposed elevations.

Further information is required regarding the extent of demolition and rebuilding. For example, the chimneys are shown to be retained, but presumably they would have to be rebuilt, if the roof is being replaced and raised up? Additionally, the relocation of the windows would necessitate the removal of the historic surrounds and mullions. Further details are required so that the extent of the loss and potential harm to the significance of the NDHA can be properly understood. Even if the materials are matched and reused, there is likely to be some residual harm from the change in proportions and form of the original property.

The existing extensions detract from the host building. In this context, there are no objections to the proposed side extension, subject to appropriate details and materials, including either natural slate or stone for the roof. Details of the making good of masonry and features should also be required for the areas where extensions are being removed (although this can be by condition, if the officer is minded to approve the application).

The existing front extension is a particularly poor addition, which obscures much of the historic front entrance, and its flat roof and proportions are at odds with the form and scale of the original building. In this regard the proposals to amend and reclad this structure could be acceptable. The comments of the Urban Design Officer are supported, and the applicant is advised to review and simplify the material palette and reconsider the pattern and position of window openings. For a contemporary addition to be successful, it is crucial that a very high standard of detailing and materials are proposed.

There are concerns about the impact of the new buildings on the setting of the former Inn. The proposed plant storage building is of particular concern. This would be a sizeable structure, which would have a footprint which appears larger than the historic Church Inn. While shown to be single storey, as its footprint, it would not be a subservient feature and would compete with the host

building for dominance on the site. The use of dark timber cladding would accentuate its presence on the site. The indicative image shows a building with horizontal timber cladding. While this is a material found on agricultural buildings in the south and east of the country, it is not typical of the northwest, where agricultural buildings would typically have been built in stone. The material palette and its size and scale would make it an incongruous and intrusive feature on the site.

The proposed amenity building, while smaller would be set beyond the existing built area, increasing the developed area around the site. The indicative images show it to be a relatively domestic looking structure, which would not reflect the rural character of the area or that of the public house.

The plans show new fencing and a new gated entrance, both of which would introduce urban features into this rural setting and would appear incongruous with the open fields surrounding the site.

The proposed gate and areas of the 2m high fencing would be visible in shared views with the listed church opposite the site. These features would be alien to the rural setting of the Church and would detract from it in some views along Castle Hill Road. It is considered that these elements of the scheme would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the church, through the introduction of inappropriate urban enclosures into its setting, which contributes to its significance.

If gates are proposed, a timber five-bar gate would be more appropriate to the rural context. Boundary treatments should either be low level stone walls or low-level open fencing such as post and rail.

It is considered that the proposed works would result in some harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset, through inappropriate development within its setting. Further details are also required of the works to raise the height of the building, so that the extent of the loss and subsequent harm can be properly understood.

This is a material consideration, and a balanced judgement should be had in respect of the impacts on this non-designated heritage asset.

The proposed fencing and gates would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. This harm should be weighed against any public benefits stemming from the proposal.

There are also concerns that the proposed use could cause a level of activity, noise and HGV movements, which would detract from the rural setting of the Church and public house. Further details of the use are required, so that these impacts can be properly considered.

## Re-consultation

Yes