

**PROPOSED ERECTION OF 5 DETACHED
UNITS AT**

LAND SOUTH
OF CHURCH
AVENUE,
MIDDLETON,
M24 2UA.

HERITAGE
STATEMENT

REV B



Heritage Statement for Church Avenue, Thornham, Greater Manchester (M24 2SA)

Site Ref: Church Avenue, Slattocks / Thornham, Middleton / Rochdale Metropolitan Borough.

Principal Heritage Assets:

- Church of St John (Thornham) (Church Avenue) – Grade II listed. [Historic England](#)
- Thornham Parish War Memorial (in the churchyard of St John) – Grade II listed. [Historic England+1](#)

Other Contextual Assets: The wider early-20th century suburban parish setting; neighbouring residential streets; landscape of Slattocks/Thornham.

Purpose of Statement: To summarise the historic, architectural and communal significance of the site, provide a baseline for conservation and inform any future development, enhancement or interpretation.

6. Location and Setting

The site lies on Church Avenue (sometimes referenced as part of the Slattocks/Thornham area) in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, in Greater Manchester (postcode M24 2SA). The church stands in the parish of Thornham, serving a semi-rural suburban neighbourhood between Middleton and Rochdale. The war memorial lies within its churchyard.

The setting is suburban in character but retains a sense of open space around the church: the churchyard provides a green buffer and gives a visual presence to the building and memorial. The avenue and adjacent residences are part of the inter-war / early-20th century suburban expansion of the village. The site therefore provides a landmark within the local area.

2. Historical Overview

Church of St John

- The current Church of St John, Thornham (also referred to as St John the Evangelist, Thornham) was built between 1905-1907 to replace a smaller earlier church on Thornham Lane. [Manchester Victorian Architects+1](#)
- Architect: R. B. Preston of Manchester. [Manchester Victorian Architects](#)
- Construction materials: random-squared millstone grit, ashlar string-courses, window surrounds, mullions; pitched Westmorland green slate roof with red clay ridges. [Historic England](#)
- The building was officially listed as Grade II on 9 May 2003, giving it statutory protection for its architectural and historic interest. [Historic England](#)

- The listing assessment notes its condition as “poor” with priority for repair works (metal corrosion causing cracking of stone window surrounds, high-level masonry issues). [Historic England](#)
- The new church was intended to serve the growing parish community of Thornham, reflecting the suburbanisation of the early 20th century and the Church of England’s response to new housing development.

War Memorial

- The Thornham Parish War Memorial was erected in 1921, paid for by public subscription and situated in the churchyard of St John. [Historic England+1](#)
- Designed and built by Grundy of Middleton (mason) with Second World War additions (1939-1945) added later. [Historic England](#)
- It stands as a poignant local memorial to those from the parish who died in the two World Wars and is listed Grade II (05 Feb 2018). [Historic England](#)
- The memorial and church are noted as having “group value” – the memorial’s significance is enhanced by its relationship to the church building. [Historic England](#)

Broader Heritage Context

- The parish is part of the wider historic landscape of Middleton/Rochdale, an area with deep church-parish and industrial growth roots. Although St John is a 20th-century building, it sits within an established ecclesiastical tradition of the area.
- The suburban growth of the early 20th century, with new housing and associated amenities, is reflected in the provision of the church and memorial.
- The site therefore reflects both architectural heritage (Gothic Revival / early 20th century church architecture) and social heritage (commemoration of war, community memory).

3. Architectural and Design Significance

Church of St John

- The design is representative of early 20th-century Anglican church architecture in a suburban context, executed in local stone with traditional detailing (ashlar string-courses, mullions, pitched slate roof) and coherent architectural language. [Historic England+1](#)
- As a Grade II listed building, it is recognised for its architectural interest, craftsmanship, materials and its role as a local landmark. The listing underlines its importance as a building of special interest. [Historic England](#)
- The listing notes the church’s current condition as poor, emphasising the need for maintenance and repair, particularly regarding metal corrosion and masonry. This underscores the ongoing conservation obligations. [Historic England](#)

- Though less ancient than medieval parish churches, its architectural integrity, scale and setting contribute to its value in the local townscape.

War Memorial

- The war memorial is notable for its dignified design: granite cross on pedestal and raised podium, simple and poignant wording, quality of materials and craftsmanship. [Historic England](#)
- Its historic interest lies in its commemoration of local sacrifice in WWI and WWII, and the way in which it expresses communal memory and identity. [Historic England](#)
- The “group value” with the church enhances the significance: the memorial is sited in the churchyard, visually and functionally connected to the church. Its listing as Grade II affirms its national heritage interest. [Historic England](#)

Setting and Townscape

- The site occupies a prominent position along Church Avenue, with the church and memorial forming a focal point within the local community.
- The churchyard’s open green space contributes to the setting, allowing the building and memorial to be viewed in context and providing a sense of pause and reflection.
- The suburban housing and street pattern of the early to mid-20th century is part of the heritage context (the expansion of Thornham as a residential area) and the church and memorial mark the civic and communal heart of the neighbourhood.

4. Social and Communal Significance

- The Church of St John remains an active centre of worship and community life in Thornham, providing continuity of use and local identity. (see facilities listings) [A Church Near You+1](#)
- The war memorial is a site of communal memory and ceremony, particularly on Remembrance occasions. Its materials and inscription convey the weight of local loss and sacrifice, anchoring the community’s links to national events.
- The pairing of church and memorial epitomises the tradition of parish-church centred commemoration in England, and therefore holds social value for residents, visitors and heritage audiences.
- The site contributes to the distinct sense of place within Thornham/Slattocks: the church-and-memorial complex is part of the neighbourhood’s identity and heritage narrative.

5. Heritage Values Summary

Value Category	Summary
Historic Value	The site reflects early-20 th century suburban parish church development; commemoration of the First and Second World Wars at a local level.
Architectural/Design Value	The church is a well-executed example of early-20 th century church architecture in local stone; the memorial is a high-quality commemorative monument in granite.
Social/Communal Value	The church continues in active use, and the memorial remains a focal point for remembrance and community identity.
Group/Contextual Value	The church and memorial together form a coherent heritage ensemble; their setting in the suburban neighbourhood enhances their significance.
Archaeological/Research Value	While era is more recent, the building and memorial offer potential insight into parish development, commemoration practices and early-20 th century ecclesiastical architecture in Greater Manchester.

6. Conclusion

The site at Church Avenue, Thornham (M24 2SA) – comprising the Church of St John and the Thornham Parish War Memorial – represents an important heritage asset in the locality. Architecturally, the church is a significant early-20th century parish building executed in quality materials; socially it anchors the community of Thornham. The war memorial embodies collective memory of sacrifice in the two world wars, with a high degree of design and material quality and statutory protection. Together, they form a coherent heritage ensemble with group value, set within a suburban context that is nonetheless intimately linked to local identity and history.

Preserving this heritage resource requires careful stewardship: addressing conservation issues, protecting the setting, and promoting understanding and engagement will help ensure that the church and memorial continue to serve future generations both as landmarks of the past and active parts of the community today.
