

HERITAGE SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Planning Application for extension to 45a St Helen's Gate, Almondbury, HD4 6SG

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Supporting Statement is submitted in relation to a planning application for the extension of 45a St Helen's Gate, Almondbury, which affects the Almondbury Conservation Area.
- 1.2 It is considered that the proposal does not affect the setting of any listed buildings or any other designated or non-designated heritage assets.
- 1.3 The requirement for a heritage statement and its scope is guided by policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. Paragraph 200 seeks an assessment proportionate to an asset's importance, enough to understand the potential impacts of the development and to appraise the nature and extent of any impact upon the setting and significance of heritage assets.
- 1.4 The heritage statement also takes into account a series of Good Practice Advice (GPA) published by Historic England of which those of most relevance to this appraisal are GPA2 - Managing Significance in Decision-taking (March 2015), GPA3 - The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition) (December 2017), Advice Note 12 Statements of Heritage Significance (Oct. 2019) (Ref 13B-9) and Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (April 2008).
- 1.5 Therefore, this heritage statement describes the application site and the proposed development and then sets out the relevant legislation, policy and guidance. In lieu of a published appraisal of Almondbury Conservation Area prepared by the planning authority, the statement assesses the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area. It then assesses the contribution of the application site to the conservation area before assessing the impact on the proposed development on the heritage asset.

THE APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 The planning application site comprises no. 45a St Helen's Gate, Almondbury, which is a modern dwelling set on a sizeable, corner site at the junction of St Helen's Gate and Dark Lane. It is a large stone, detached property with pitched roof which steps down from two storeys to three storeys from north to south across the sloping site.
- 2.2 The roadside boundary is enclosed by an historic stone wall which is supplemented by timber trellis fencing, shrubs and mature trees. The curtilage is taken up with a gravelled access and parking spaces offset by lawned areas.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The subject planning application proposes a two-storey flat-roofed infill extension to the rear south extension between the projecting wings to the rear south elevation.

LEGISLATION, DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND GUIDANCE

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 For the purposes of decision making on this site, the Development Plan is the Kirklees Local Plan Strategy and Policies (adopted 27 February 2019) and the relevant policy is Policy SP23(4) which is the strategic policy for the historic environment. It seeks to conserve and enhance the district's historic assets which contribute to the distinct identity of Kirklees. Development that is harmful will only be permitted if the public benefits outweigh the harm.

4.3 Section 72(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Local Planning Authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

4.4 National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023 (the Framework) includes policies relating to heritage assets and states 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.

4.5 'Conservation' is defined in the Framework as the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and where appropriate enhances its significance.

4.6 Paragraph 203: "In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness."

4.7 Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

4.8 When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset paragraph 205 says that "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".

4.9 Paragraph 206 says that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), "should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of: (a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; (b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional."

4.10 The Framework makes a distinction between substantial and less than substantial harm. Paragraph 207 states that where proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of) the significance of a heritage asset, local authorities should refuse consent, unless it

can be demonstrated that substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm.

4.11 Paragraph 208 says that 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.

CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF ALMONDBURY CONSERVATION AREA

5.1 Almondsbury is a self-contained settlement surrounded by agricultural land on the southern fringe of Huddersfield close to Castle Hill, Huddersfield's most prominent landmark. It occupies a shelf above the wide Colne Valley with the land at its southern extent along Bank Foot Road sloping steeply down the valley side.

5.2 As previously stated, there is no adopted conservation area appraisal, in the absence of which, the following paragraphs are an evaluation of the special historic and architectural character of the conservation area to act as a baseline for the assessment of the impact of the development on the conservation area.

5.3 Almondsbury appears in the Domesday Book as "Almondeberie". After the Norman Conquest, the land around the village was held by the De Lacy family. For 300 years until the 17th century, the village's Monday Market was the most important in the area. Almondsbury was the hub of parish activity and in its early history was a more important centre than the town of Huddersfield (reference Almondsbury - Huddersfield Exposed: Exploring the History of the Huddersfield Area).

5.4 The core is the 13th century St Hallows Church which is at the confluence of Northgate, Westgate, Fenay Lane and its spur, St Helen's Gate. The historic core of Almondsbury is dominated by long, straight streets of Northgate and Westgate which are indicative of a planned medieval settlement consisting of long tofts with crofts running perpendicular to the street.

5.5 The townscape is characterised by tightly packed continuous frontages of two-storey houses on the back edge of the pavement. The wide mullioned windows lend the houses to the domestic production of woollen cloth which was main occupation of the population until the establishment of factory production in the late 18th century.

5.6 St Helen's Gate is a different character area to the historic core, comprised of steeply inclined winding lanes enclosed by high stone boundary walls backed up with trees, which are the defining characteristics of this character area. The buildings are of a diverse character, being a mixture of dispersed 18th and 19th brick and stone domestic properties laid out reflecting the curvature of the lane and late 20th century houses, like the application property, set in large grounds where the buildings are secondary to the trees on the boundary. King James's School at the southern end of St Helen's Gate is the exception and the most significant building complex of modern buildings and the listed 18th century entrance block.

CONTRIBUTION OF APPLICATION SITE TO ALMONDBURY CONSERVATION AREA

6.1 The application site is in the St Helen's Gate character area within the Almondbury Conservation Area. The existing building is a symmetrical composition of balanced projecting gables with mullioned windows and is similar in character to the house immediately to the south, Almondburie House.

6.2 The historical reference for the designs of both the houses is the 17th century Yeoman's House.

6.3 Overall no. 45a St Helen's Gate can be considered to make a neutral contribution to the conservation area.

6.4 The stone boundary wall is part of the continuous thread of stone and brick walls fronting the highway which unifies this part of the conservation area and is a positive element of the conservation area. Similarly, the shrubs and trees behind the contribute positively to the conservation area and in combination with the walls are the primary elements of this part of the conservation area rather than the secondary buildings behind.

6.5 Despite being a large building, the application site is hidden by trees and largely invisible travelling south along St Helen's Gate. Moving north along Helen's Gate, the application property is glimpsed through the gated entrance where the gable inclines into the view and the front elevation is seen obliquely and then disappears behind the boundary wall and the trees and shrubs.

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON ALMONDBURY CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 The application proposals will not impact on the boundary wall or the boundary planting and therefore the positive elements of the site will be preserved.

7.3 The fenestration of the rear extension will follow the existing mullioned windows and is not visible from any public vantage points.

7.4 The overall impact of the extension is considered to be neutral to slightly positive due to the infill of the existing wings.

CONCLUSION

8.1 The proposed extension to 45a St Helen's Gate will maintain the elements of the site which contribute positively to the Almondbury Conservation Area, which is principally the boundary treatment, comprising extensive planting behind the boundary wall.

8.2 Overall, the impact of the proposed development is considered to be neutral to slightly positive.

8.3 On this basis, the proposal conforms with the Kirklees Local Plan which seeks to conserve and enhance the district's historic assets which contribute to the distinct identity of Kirklees. It also conforms with sections 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act

1990 which requires decision makers to have special regard should be had to preserving the special interest of the listed buildings, including its setting, and preserving or enhancing the special architectural or historic interest of conservation areas.

8.4 It also conforms with National Planning Policy Framework guidance which says that development proposals that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably