



Groves Town

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Client	Mr P Soni
Document Title	Planning and Heritage Statement
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Site	82 Market Street Earlestown WA12 9BW

1 Introduction

1.1 An application for planning permission has previously been submitted under application reference P/2023/0576/FUL. Permission was sought for a development of the following description.

Change of use from beauty salon (Sui Generis) to 5no. bedroom HMO (Class C4) to the ground floor with single storey rear extension following the removal of the existing extension

1.2 The application was refused for the following reasons

The development would result in a poor form of residential accommodation which would be cramped and overdeveloped, with poor outlook and limited natural light and insufficient privacy for future occupants. The proposal would result in substandard living conditions for future occupiers and would not accord with policies LPC01, LPD01, LPD02 of the St Helens Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposal would prejudice Earlestown town centre. Insufficient information has been submitted in relation to the proposed development to able to justify the loss of the commercial unit on the ground floor, which would be contrary to policy LPC04 of the St. Helens Local Plan 2037, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.3 This application takes account of the previous submission and the reasons for refusal.

1.4

2 The application site and recent history

2.1 The application premises have most recently been used as a beauty salon. This has resulted in the creation of a number of compartments within the building used to provide therapies and sun tanning.

2.2 This use is has not taken place recently and the accommodation is not in the best state of repair.

2.3 An application for planning permission 2022/0732/FUL was submitted in October 2022. Planning permission was sought for the change of use from Beauty/Tanning salon (sui generis) to 5 bedroom HMO (Class C4) with external alterations and removal of existing single storey rear extension.

2.4 Whilst the application was withdrawn prior to determination consultation responses, notably that from the Council's Conservation advisors expressed concern over the adequacy of the submissions in terms of impact on a heritage asset – the Conservation Area. (See memorandum dated 15 November 2022 from Growth Lancashire Ltd) Growth Lancashire is understood to be an external provided of conservation and heritage advice to the Council.

2.5 This advice notes the failure of submissions with the previous application to follow the guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of the potential impact of development on a heritage asset.

3 Description of the existing building

3.1 .82 Market Street is a two storey brick mid-terrace building. It has a timber shopfront at ground floor level with two access doors, one which leads to the first floor and one which provides access to the shop.



2009



2018



2022

3.2 It is clear that the erosion of an architectural merit of this group of buildings has been taking place for many years. Alteration to fenestration at first floor level, the addition of unsympathetic advertisements, the change to the shop front of no 84 and the addition of an extension to the southern end of the block has seriously diminished the merit of the group of buildings. This has been compounded by the later removal of the traditional shop front to no 80, leaving 82 as the only frontage bearing any semblance to what might have been the original treatment.

3.3 Later images show how the erosion of character has been further diminished through the addition of a security shutter, which has meant that when closed any features of the existing shop front are hidden from view.

4 Policy

4.1 Local policy relating to the protection of heritage assets is covered by the St Helens Local Plan (2020-2035) Historic Environment - Policy LPC11. This policy

predates some later national guidance but follows the essential expectations of the latest version of the National Planning Framework.

4.2 The Framework includes the following provisions

In determining planning applications LPA's 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.*

Paragraph 205 states that when considering the impact of proposals on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be applied. This is irrespective of whether any harm is identified as being substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 208 identifies that where a proposal would 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.

5 The Earlestown Conservation Area

5.1 The Conservation Area Appraisal 2016 that the numerous shopfronts which have been partially infilled with masonry walling surrounding smaller domestically

scaled windows as negative characteristics of the area. It is also noted that the cumulative impact of these individually small changes has been to lose some of the uniformity of the area and in Earlestown this uniformity is part of the defining character of the area, as exemplified by the formal lines of buildings on rows of terraced streets.

5.2 The proposed development has been amended and the shop front and commercial use of the front of the building has been retained having regard to potential impact on heritage.

6 The proposed development

6.1 The proposals now tabled amend the detail of the previously withdrawn and refused schemes. The premises retains use as a small HMO but revised plans show just two bed sitting rooms at ground floor. The first floor flat is not affected by the development. Existing outbuildings are to be demolished and replaced by a new, smaller extension to accommodate part of the HMO space.

6.2 Critically the proposed development not only retains the shopfront as existing but also keeps the commercial use at the front of the building.

7 Appraisal

7.1 In response to the previous applications submitted in relation to the application site, conservation advice appears to recognise that the importance of the asset relates as much to layout and the manner in which this expresses the expansion of Earlestown, with the geometrical layout of the area contributing more significantly

to the key elements of the area than character and appearance of individual buildings.

7.2 Notwithstanding this assessment of the significance of the heritage asset, advice concluded that the shopfront is a positive feature and the impact of its removal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

7.3 Whilst the extent to which the shopfront contributes to character and appearance is considered debatable, given the extent of alteration and development which has already taken place – the proposed development is able to accommodate the retention of the existing shop front.

7.4 The advice previously provided to the Council concludes with the observation that harm would be mitigated by the retention of the shopfront

7.5 Advice also notes that works to the rear of property as previously proposed raise no issue.

7.6 The reason for refusal of P/2023/0576/FUL related at least in part, to the need to justify the loss of commercial use to the front the application premises. Whilst the ability to ensure ongoing commercially viable use might be question the solution offered in this instance is the retention of a smaller scale retail unit which would hopefully provide viable accommodation for a new user. The second reason for refusal is overcome in this way

7.7 The other reason for refusal related to the nature of the residential accommodation. This issue is resolved by the considerable reduction in the scale of accommodation, producing 2 bedsits with access to light and open space to a much greater degree than the previous proposal. If necessary the communal yard

area shown on the proposed layout plan could be modified and dedicated to one flat, with access to the second flat taken directly from the rear elevation

7.8 In this manner it is considered that the reasons previously table for refusal have been addressed. In this way requirements of local policy and the tests of the Framework are met by the proposal now submitted.