

67 – 77 High Street

Northfleet
Kent
DA11 9HJ

Architectural Management

Architecture and Heritage Consultants

HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR A NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



August 2025

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose

This Heritage Statement is produced to accompany a Planning Application for the erection of a new residential block.

The site address is 67-77 High Street, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9HJ.

The subject of this Heritage Statement is to consider the significance of the site and the impact of the proposal upon the setting of the adjacent listed building.

This report is produced by Ian Alderton of Architectural Management Ltd upon commission by JB Property Ltd. and is to be read in conjunction with the architectural proposals produced by Breley Design, scheme designer.

The general format of this report will be;

- To briefly describe the overall application site
- To outline the character and setting of the surroundings
- To describe the impact of the proposal upon the fabric, character and setting of the environs
- Conclusion

During the assessment of the setting, no detailed archival historical research into the development of the proposal site has been undertaken. The specific aim of this report is to assess the effect of the scheme upon the setting of the heritage asset.

The format, techniques and content of this Assessment draw upon the guidance from the English Heritage Publication; Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance (dated 23rd April 2008), supported by Historic England and The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) published December 2017.

The Guidance provides a comprehensive framework for the sustainable management of the historic environment, within which 'Conservation' is defined as the process of managing change to a significant place and its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations.

2.0 Preamble

The NPPF Paragraph 207 states that... *In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.*

The proposals for this scheme include changes adjacent to a listed building. The proposal may have an effect upon the setting of the listed building.

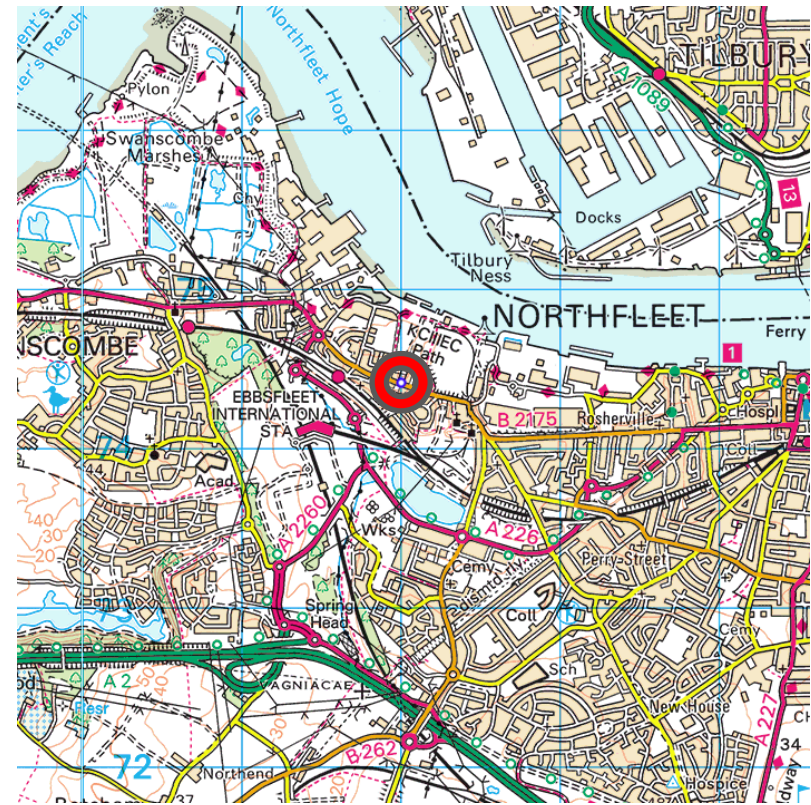
With regard to Paragraph 207 of the NPPF, the level of detail supplied within this Assessment is considered to be proportionate to the potential impact of development.

3.0 Location



The national location of Northfleet in Kent is shown left.

The site is located in the centre of Northfleet, which is some 5 miles to the east of Dartford in Kent. The site (red circle) is shown below.



4.0 General Description of the Application Site and its Setting

The overall application site



The site is presently a car wash facility, located to the south side of the High Street. It has temporary canopies over parts but is predominately open. To the east of the site is 67 High Street, a semi detached dwelling, currently in commercial use, which forms part of the application site. To the south is a hoarding and industrial type storage buildings atop a limestone cliff edge which is lined with trees. This is the edge of a former quarry working. To the west is an open sided industrial type shed that houses a diner. That site was formerly a cinema.

Directly opposite the application site is the Factory Club (40 High Street), a grade II listed building. It is the only listed building in the vicinity.

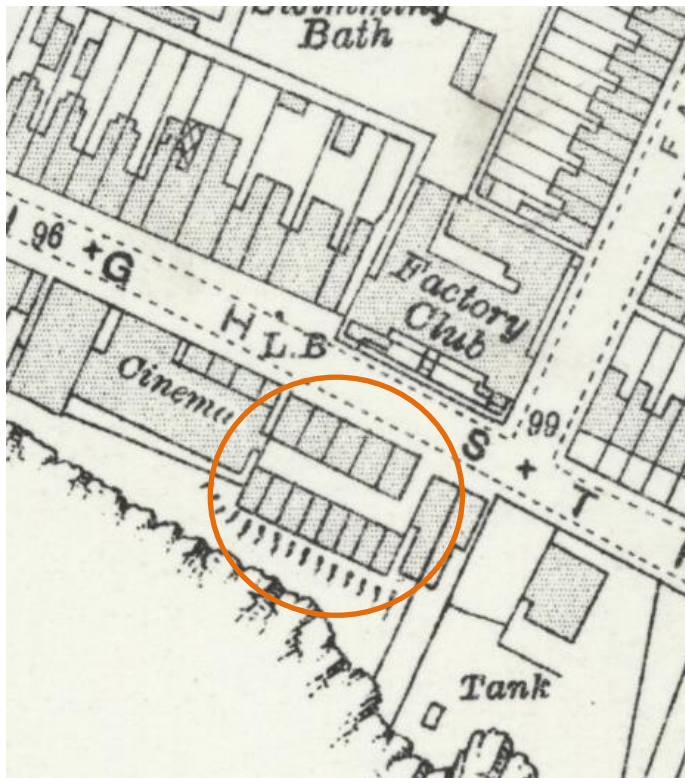
Historic Development



The extract of the 1895 25 inch OS map (image left) shows the Factory Club building opposite, with the row of houses on the north side of the High Street, which existed at that time. The approximate site area is marked.

The image right shows an extract of the 1931 25 inch OS map of the area. It shows the buildings (possibly houses and garages?) that had appeared on the site after 1910, including 67 High Street and its attached neighbour.

The proposal site is ringed.



The modern cement factories, which once completely dominated the industrial landscape between the site and the estuary were built in 1968/69 and ceased to trade in 2008. They were demolished starting in 2012. The former industrial and quarrying sites immediately to the south of the river are now being redeveloped for housing as part of the Kent Thameside regeneration project, overlapping with the redevelopment associated with Ebbsfleet and, to an extent, the Bluewater Complex.

In the late 2000's the application site began use as a car wash, as it remains today, with a tyre fitting workshop.



The image left shows the application site.

5.0 Description of the Heritage Asset



The image left shows the south (front) elevation of the Factory Club to the High Street and east elevation to Factory Road. It sits on the north side of the High Street.

The building took three years to build and was opened on 31 July 1878, funded (at a cost of £11000) by Thomas Bevan (the then owner of the cement factory) and to the designs of architects Parr and Strong. It was in honour of Bevan's eldest son, Robert, for his coming of age. It was formerly the Factory Club and later known as the Blue Circle Club, as part of the social facilities of the cement factory.

Prior to 1945 the club was open to all members of the public and was the cultural centre of Northfleet. It comprised two halls, a games room, sports facilities, a library and was the headquarters of the Northfleet Choral Society plus numerous other local societies. Amongst various other features added over the years was a bowling green and an outdoor swimming pool that was opened in 1907.



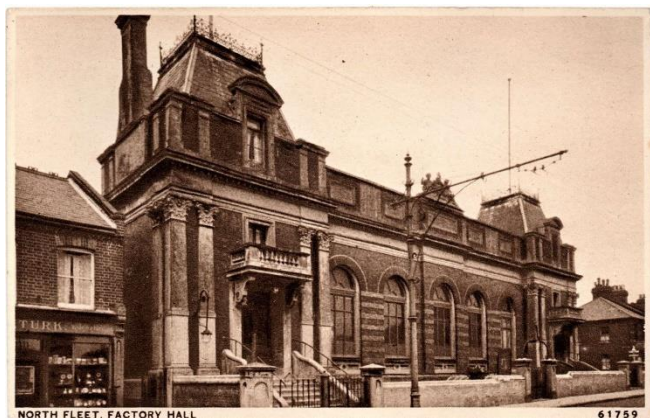
The building is grade II listed.

The image left shows the building at the top of the hill on the High Street, possibly in the late C19th or early C20th. None of the residential and commercial premises shown in the image now survive.

It was once nowhere near as conspicuous as it is now, when it was originally part of the building line along the road, designed to integrate with the lines of housing and shops.



The image left shows the front and west elevations.



Contrast with the undated photograph right, of the same elevations. It once had balconies over the entrance doors.

The building is now in a poor state, being derelict and having stood empty since 2009, or possibly much earlier (dates are unclear). It has suffered a number of fires, suspected to be deliberate, the most recent of which was in March 2025. Internally some of the ceilings have collapsed and the roof structures of the lower level buildings to the rear have been destroyed by fire. Images posted online by urban explorers show the pitiful state of the interior.



The image left shows the High Street, probably around the mid/late 1960's, with the Factory Club at the top of the hill.



The image left shows the Factory Club in context with the proposal site opposite.

6.0 Description of the Proposals

The scheme comprises the erection of 14 residential units in a single four storey block.



Details of the proposals can be read from the Breley Design drawings.

7.0 Impact Assessment

Criteria for Assessment

The following section assesses the significance of the setting of the heritage asset, in accordance with Section 16 of the NPPF and Historic England: Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance and The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Second Edition) (referred to henceforth as GPA3).

The assessment of how the proposed development will potentially impact upon the setting of the identified heritage assets has been undertaken using the guidance detailed GPA3. This recommends that an assessment should take into account the following factors when assessing the impact of a development:

- Location and Siting;
- Form and Appearance;
- Additional Effects; and
- Permanence.

The level of change will be assessed upon the following criteria:

Level of Change	Description
Major Beneficial	The proposed changes will substantially alter key elements of the heritage asset in a positive way, better revealing and/or enhancing important characteristics. There would be a substantial improvement to the understanding of important elements of the asset's significance.
Moderate Beneficial	The proposed changes will have a considerable positive effect on key elements of the heritage asset, such that they improve the overall character or significance of the heritage asset. There may be an improvement in key uses and beneficial change (e.g. the creation of coherency) to the characteristics of the asset.
Minor Beneficial	The proposed changes may cause a minor improvement to the character of a heritage asset.
Negligible	The proposed changes will have a very minor effect upon on the heritage asset or very minor impact on the overall character of the surrounding context.
Neutral	The proposed changes will have no impact on the overall character of the surrounding context.
Minor Adverse	The proposed changes will have minor impact on key elements of the heritage asset, such that the overall character of a heritage asset is negatively affected. Change of this magnitude may be acceptable if suitable mitigation is carried out.
Moderate Adverse	The proposed changes will have a considerable negative effect on the overall character and significance of the heritage asset. It will likely disturb key features and be harmful to overall heritage significance. Change of this magnitude should be avoided where possible, but can be minimised or neutralised through positive mitigation.
Major Adverse	The proposed changes will cause a substantial disruption to, or, in some cases, the complete destruction of important features of the heritage asset, such that its significance is substantially harmed. Change of this magnitude should be avoided.

In order to more fully understand the effect of the impact of proposals the following assessment provides a comparable analysis of the heritage value against the level of change. This assessment is based on the criteria set out by International Council on Monuments and Sites* and is a clear way of understanding not just the impact of change but how levels of impact vary according to the value of the heritage asset.

Overall level of impact				
Level of Change	Sensitivity/Significance			
	Neutral	Low	Medium	High
Major Beneficial	Slight	Slight/Moderate	Moderate/Large	Large/Very large
Moderate Beneficial	Neutral/Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/Large
Minor Beneficial	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight	Slight/Moderate
Negligible	Neutral	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight
Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Negligible	Neutral	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight
Minor Adverse	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight	Slight/Moderate
Moderate Adverse	Neutral/Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/Large
Major Adverse	Slight	Slight/Moderate	Moderate/Large	Large/Very large

The following levels of harm may potentially be identified:

- **Substantial harm or total loss.** Harm that would 'have such a serious impact on the significance of the asset that its significance was either vitiated altogether or very much reduced'
- **Less than substantial harm.** Harm of a lesser level than that defined above
- **No harm (preservation).** A High Court Judgement of 2014 held that with regard to preserving the setting of Listed building or preserving the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, 'preserving' means 'doing no harm'.

Preservation does not mean no change; it specifically means no harm. Historic England guidance states that*Change to heritage assets is inevitable but it is only harmful when significance is damaged.* Thus change is accepted in Historic England's guidance as part of the evolution of the landscape and environment. What matters is whether such change is natural, harmful or beneficial to the significance of an asset.

With regards to changes in setting, GPA 3 states that*protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change*, with the above statement regarding the type of impact on the significance being key.

The following assessment is limited to considering the effects occasioned upon the setting of the heritage asset by the proposed scheme.

* ICOMOS (January 2011) Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties.

Significance of the Heritage Assets

Setting is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as*The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.*

It is important to understand how the setting contributes to the significance of the heritage asset.

It is also important to consider the heritage value of an asset. The English Heritage Publication; Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance (dated 23rd April 2008) sets out the following:

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

•

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.

•

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

•

Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The setting of the Factory Club

There is no substantial contribution made to the significance of the building by the surrounding lands and spaces around the building. However, the housing that remains in Factory Road is certainly closely related to the earlier function of the building.

The significance of the building is derived mainly from its age, architectural value and its communal value through the years. It was an intrinsic part of the social fabric of the area, closely allied to the cement works, and offering the only communal leisure facility for the whole of the industrial cement works operation. It was once a very important part of the social landscape and, no doubt, features prominently in the memories of people who were employed at the works and others who lived in the area.

Therefore the historical and communal values may be high. The aesthetic value is medium as it is an imposing building, far more prominent now than it was ever designed or intended to be, due to the loss of the other buildings that closely surrounded it. It was designed to be a feature amongst the more mundane housing and shops, as a part of the street scene, but relatively richly detailed as a reminder of its important function as a social hub and evidence of the prosperity of the cement works.

Sadly, after many years of standing empty, the building is falling into dereliction and apparently bereft of a beneficial use. Its vulnerability is clear, evidenced by the number of arson incidents within the building. This does not affect the communal value but, inevitably, it will diminish the architectural and aesthetic values of the building.

The application site was vacant during the earlier years of the Factory Club and had dwellings and other buildings on it from the inter-war years. The use has changed over time. The present use, despite offering a useful and popular service, appears impermanent and offers no visual enhancement to the area.

Overall the setting of the application site is considered to have a **neutral** contribution to the significance of the listed building.

Impact upon the Heritage Assets

The setting of the Factory Club

The scheme will occasion a substantial change to the proposal site itself, in that it will contain a four storey building where it presently does not, but as this space does not offer any substantial contribution to the setting of the heritage asset, it will not occasion an unacceptable impact upon the listed building.

The proposed building has one more storey than the existing domestic scale building on the site but the stepped nature of the street elevation of the first and second floors, and the further set back of the top floor, offers relief from what might otherwise have been a bluff and towering street frontage, and creates a building line that gives greater space to the listed building as it grows in height. Overall the proposed building is not as tall as the listed building which reduces the potential for it to have a greater presence than the listed building.

The proposal does not interfere with the understanding of the building nor any of its key elements.

Setting	Level of Change to setting	Significance of setting to the asset	Overall Impact
The Factory Club	Moderate	Neutral	Neutral/Slight

The resulting impact on the setting due to the proposal is, on balance, considered to be **neutral**.

8.0 Conclusion

The proposed scheme for 14 residential units will occasion a substantial degree of change to the proposal site, but this does not impose unacceptably upon the adjacent heritage asset.

In the NPPF paragraph 215 it states 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.*

The proposal site itself does not diminish any significance of the heritage asset.

In the NPPF paragraph 210 it states that, in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of;

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

This report has analysed the factors which will be occasioned by the proposal. It had determined that overall a neutral impact would be occasioned to the setting of the heritage asset. This constitutes no harm and consequently the NPPF paragraph 215 test is not engaged by this application.

The scheme offers an opportunity to provide new residential accommodation, achieved without detriment or harm to the historic asset and its setting.

Appendices

Extract of Listing for The Factory Club

Name: THE FACTORY CLUB, HIGH STREET

List entry Number: 1081091

County	District	District Type	Parish
Kent	Gravesham	District Authority	Non Civil Parish

Date first listed: 26 July 1983 **Grade:** II

Built in 1878 to designs by Parr and Strong for Bevan's cement (Pyramid Brand) as a recreational hall and rooms for the workers (still used as such by Blue Circle).

It comprises brick-built basement, double height ground floor and attic with added classical decoration and slate roofs.

Recessed centre section containing 5 tall round-headed windows and tower-like end sections containing doors which are reached from the pavement by bridges across the area. The end sections have corners decorated with Corinthian pilasters and rise to French-Chateau-type steep pitched roofs containing dormer windows, topped by decorative cast-iron railings. The whole roof lies behind a tall, elaborately decorated parapet with a central coat of arms. Building retains skilful, relatively early examples of Portland cement decoration.

Listing NGR: TQ6473774278