

Heritage Impact Statement

79-80 High Street, Gravesend DA11 0BH



Project no. 1961

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Client:

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1. Introduction

This Planning and Heritage Statement has been prepared by Design and Plan Consultants Ltd on behalf of SD and JD Property Limited. This Heritage and Conservation Strategy document supports a full planning application for the conversion and refurbishment to 79-80 High Street.

The purpose of this assessment is to comply with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) by demonstrating that the applicant has understood the heritage significance of the listed building and the implications of proposed works.

The objective of this document is to detail how the fabric detail of the building will be respected and 79-80 High Street distinctive qualities sympathetically maintained, restored and enhanced. The conversion strategy has been developed following a broad understanding of the history and context of the buildings and will ensure a sensitive, practical and appropriate fabric strategy. All new elements will be carefully considered to ensure they fully respect the character and appearance of the building and conservation area context.

The development site is located in the High Street/ Queen Street CA Conservation Area. 79-80 High Street is a four-storey building, a former office, into which a modern shop front has been set in the past. The property is in a conservation area and is a Grade II Listed Building. The site sits in High Street. The property is a four storey of the terrace building. The building consists of a four floor plus a loft conversion, with a retail unit on the ground floor and offices on the upper floors. The building is in a very poor state of repair and in recent years the upper floors have been vacant and not achieved a good level of occupation. The owners now wish to reinvest into the property by carry out major repairs and an upgrade of the accommodation being provided.

Proposed Development

The intention of the planning application submitted is to do a converted from shops and offices into a House in Multiple (HMO) accommodation 8 bedrooms comprising no more than 12 persons. The entrance access to the property will be from High Street.

2. Site and Surrounding

The High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area was designated on 16th January 1970 by Kent County Council. The Conservation Area's boundary contains the historic thoroughfare of High Street and stretch of the riverside including part of West Street, the Town Pier, St Andrews Gardens and the Clarendon Royal Hotel.

The High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area lies at the centre of the historic town, an area that was identified as the 'Heritage Quarter' in the Gravesend Town Centre Strategy of 1998. The Conservation Area is to the north of the modern shopping area, which is focused around the St George's Shopping Centre in New Road. The Conservation Area extends further north to the River Thames, including the parish church, Town Pier, part of West Street and a stretch of the riverside.

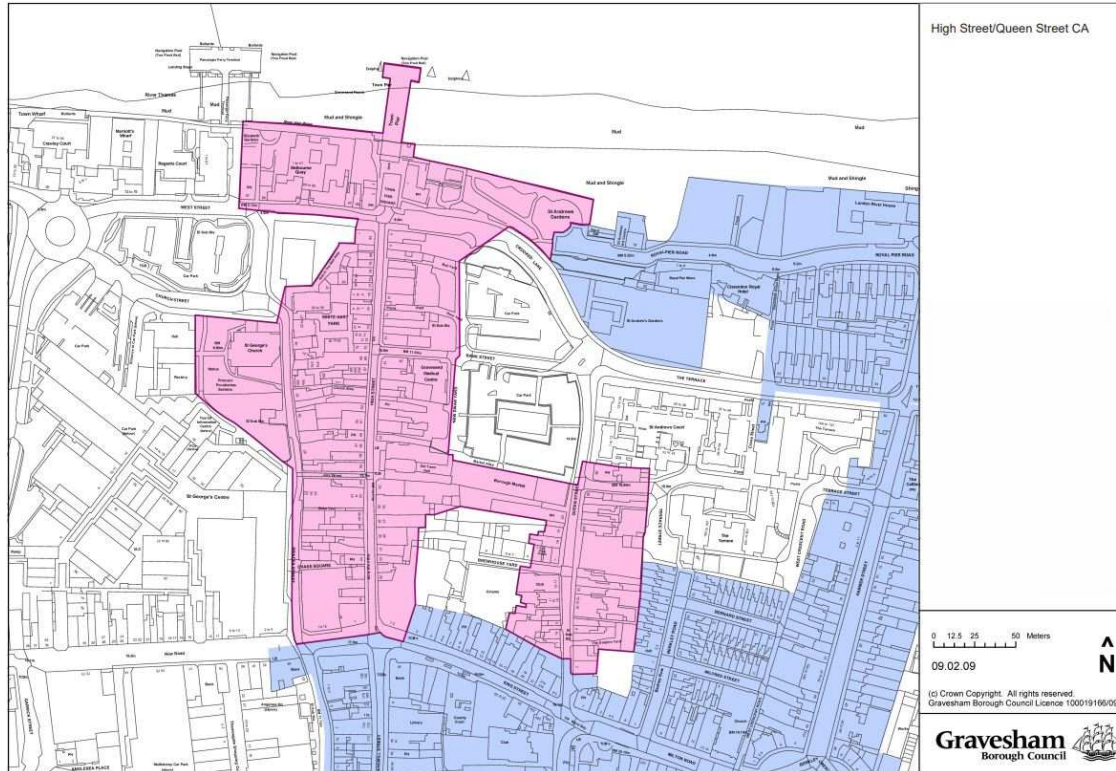
The core of the High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area contains many commercial premises in a range of shops with living accommodation above. These include a number of catering establishments and public houses as well as other local businesses such as hairdressers, beauty salons and gift shops. Very few of the shops on the High Street are part of national chains. High Street also contains public buildings such as the Old Town Hall, which connects with the Borough Market Hall, and St George's Parish Church.

The high density of tall three or four storey buildings within the narrow High Street and around the town in general inhibits further views. However, along the riverside the flat topography and opening up of the streetscape allows for extensive views along the river.

The historic buildings in the Conservation Area are typical of a town that has developed in a series of stages and with a variety of uses: they have a range of architectural styles, building form, details and materials. Many of the buildings to be found in the Conservation Area today are historic, and most stand on the sites of much earlier buildings that have been periodically destroyed by fire, flood or other causes. Despite this history of destruction, Gravesend, and High Street in particular, has retained a long history of buildings lining these historic routes. Since the early medieval period these buildings have been a mix of commercial and residential buildings and today they form tightly packed rows of tall buildings, mostly with shop fronts to the ground floor.

The site 79-80 High Street which is listed grade II and make an important contribution to the townscape of the high street Conservation Area. It is recommended that consideration should be given to support the proposed scheme to enhance the street facades of the property. Many of the early 18th century buildings along High Street and elsewhere in the town received replacement brick frontages in the 19th century. Many of these still remain and contain some surviving timber frame structure. Another significant building material is the timber weatherboarding (usually sided horizontally) still found on some of the building in the Conservation Area. Weatherboarding has been a characteristic of Kent for many centuries and is associated with more modest houses, being more affordable than tile-hanging or facing with brick.

The overall character is historic and is complemented by the use of traditional materials and patterns used for the road surface. The traditional appearance of the northern part of the High Street belies its history. Many of the buildings were rebuilt towards the end of the 20th century, albeit in a traditional style, and the last 20 years has seen extensive improvements to a rundown area.



The areas that have been identified as having a higher heritage significance the design intent has been to conserve and refurbish the existing fabric of the buildings with any necessary changes to be sensitive and kept to the absolute minimum. Where the heritage significance is deemed to be lower or neutral the scope for change has logically been considered to increase, albeit within the respectful context of the building.

A number of unlisted buildings have been identified as being buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as having 'townscape merit' will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded.

The site is situated within the Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area as defined by the adopted Local Plan Policies Map and is in a sustainable location. It is a few minutes' walking distance from the town centre where a range of services and facilities, including transport links are available. Educational and recreational facilities are within close proximity to the site.

3. Principle of Development

The NPPF set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Paragraph 2 notes that planning law requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and Paragraph 8 sets out the three objectives of achieving sustainable development being economic, social and environmental.

In terms of decision-making, Paragraph 11 states that where a development accords with a local plan, applications should be approved without delay. Where a plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. The NPPF further goes on to state at Paragraph 38 that LPAs should approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way and decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

The surrounding area in High Street is predominantly a commercial shop with living accommodation above in character and consists of a mixture of shops and flats. The proposal would involved the creation of converted from shops and officers into a House in Multiple (HMO) accommodation 8 bedrooms within a few minutes walking distance from the Gravesend town centre which is an accessible and sustainable location for such development. Core Strategy Policy CS02 seeks to ensure the Borough's objectively assessed need for at least 6,170 new dwellings is met and prioritises development in the urban area. The Gravesham Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (2016 – 2021) states a need for 2,166 new dwellings up to the year 2021. The proposed development for a net increase of accommodations flat would offer a modest contribution towards meeting this local need. Additionally, the site is situated within the Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area where Core Strategy Policy CS05 supports the provision of new residential development subject to a satisfactory living environment being achieved.

In terms of the sitting of the proposed building on the site, whilst this space would be amenity land, it is not being used for the same and remains under utilised. The proposal will bring this part of the site back into beneficial use and help in considerably improving the street scene in line with Policy CS05 which states that within the Opportunity Area, the Council will support the redevelopment of under-used sites where this makes more efficient use of the sites and improves townscape character.

The proposed development on this site would therefore be in accordance with Policy CS02 of Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) which prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. It is also broadly in line with the referenced

policies in the NPPF and as such, Gravesham Borough Council would be acceptable in principle.

Impact of the proposal on the Conservation Area

Policy CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy accords a high priority towards the preservation, protection and enhancement of the heritage and historic environment as a non-renewable resource, central to the regeneration of the area and the reinforcement of sense of place. The policy states that securing viable, sustainable and appropriate futures for such assets at risk will need to be reconciled with the sensitivity to change that many present. Saved Policy TC3 of the Local Plan First Review states “Where development is acceptable in relation to other policies in this Plan, it will be carefully judged for its impact and will be expected to make a positive contribution to the conservation area”. The Terrace Street appraisal acknowledges that properties in this street are generally in a reasonable state of repair but suffer from the flow of traffic around the ring road and air quality issues. Many of the properties have been converted to flats and/or bedsits and as such many of the properties suffer from neglect.

Architecture features of the existing building as well as buildings in the surrounding area will be reflected in the proposal to maintain the character and appearance of the townscape.

National planning policy clearly establishes that conservation and enhancement of the historic environment should be afforded considerable importance within the planning process and that decisions should be made on the basis of an informed evaluation of the significance of designated and nondesignated assets. The weight accorded to the heritage interest in any decision will depend on the significance of the asset and the degree of harm caused to it or its setting compared to the public benefit that may derive from the development proposed. It also allows local authorities to consider the benefits of enabling development to secure the future conservation of a heritage asset. In determining applications, Para 192 of the NPPF require LPAs to 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

The proposal can only be considered to improve and enhance the visual impact of the building and the Conservation Area as a whole. The detail provided clearly shows that the site is capable of accommodating the proposed development without having any detrimental effect on the street scene or the amenity of neighbouring properties. The design proposed in this application and the materials to be used are both of high quality and sympathetic to the surrounding area thereby according with policy.

4. Heritage Impact Considerations

This section of the assessment describes the proposed change, and its effect on the significance of heritage assets.

It is proposed to do a converted from a shops and offices into a House in Multiple (HMO) accommodation 8 bedrooms comprising no more than 12 people. The proposed is subservient to the main building in height and are not excessive in size and bulk. All materials to be used keeping in line with existing fabric on site which are appropriated to the historic character of the building. There will be some internal structural alterations to the property and will have a little effect on the interior of the building.

It is a sympathetic insertion that would suit today's life style and requirements of a growing number of populations.

The proposed works will restore the rear facade much closer to its original form, and will be beneficial as far as the significance of the listed building is concerned. Effect on the exterior of the listed building will be kept to minimum.

The interior of the building will be altered due to the layout of the room change and achieved minimum required room sizes and amenity spaces for dwelling house or HMO for The Council's Residential Layout Guidelines indicate the required room sizes and amenity spaces for dwelling houses. This will not have any effect on the character and appearance of the building.

5. Conclusion

The applicant has taken on board all the Council's and National policies to provide a sustainable residential use for the property given its proximity to the Town Centre and with its shopping facilities and public transport modes being within easy walking distance. The prospective layout and design are in keeping with the good design principles outlined in the NPPF and Council's policies and would be in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area.

It is a site that fulfils the requirements of the NPPF in supporting a presumption in favour of sustainable development and particularly residential development. The proposal would make a positive contribution to the enhancement of the existing built development and street scene. It would reinstate the original historic features of the existing building and provide an enhancement to the conservation area and listed building.

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There would be no adverse impact on the amenities of any nearby residents nor would it have any detrimental impact on the vitality and visual amenity of the area. It is our view that the application should be supported and permission for the proposed development granted.