



**RICS**

**UNDERWOOD Associates  
CHARTERED BUILDING SURVEYORS**

# **HERITAGE STATEMENT**

**CLASSROOM EXTENSION  
to  
ST JAMES' C of E INFANT SCHOOL  
HIGH STREET, WHITEHAVEN**



**Elevation to High Street**

## **1.0 Description & Setting**

This document seeks to inform planning application Ref: 4/21/2536/0F1, for consent to construct a classroom extension to the northern end of St James' Infant School, High Street, Whitehaven.

The development is located within the High Street Conservation area and opposite a terrace of Grade II listed dwellings.

The existing school is of a typical modern 1960's style, with strong horizontal emphasis. It features brown facing brick elevations, shallow mono pitched roofs, deep UPVC fascia detailing and white powder coated aluminium windows. It is a functional building and without specific architectural merit.



**Main frontage**



### **Northern end – Extension site**

The school frontage is set back from High Street at a slightly lower level beneath a grassed embankment. The boundary is formed by a low stone wall surmounted by a metal hooped fence which transitions to a high metal palisade fence to the northern end where the extension would be located.

Along the main site frontage are a number of mature trees which provide a sense of separation between the school and the public road as well as offering natural screening of the site.



### **High Street Frontage**

Alongside the internal site boundaries there are a number of immature trees, mainly cherry, which are planted just inside the palisade boundary fence. Structural engineering advice confirms that these trees would need to be removed as part of the proposal as they would be too close to the new building (notwithstanding that they have probably been planted too close together in any event).



**Internal boundary – trees to be removed**



**Internal boundary – trees to be removed**

To the north is a public park/area of green open space – the mature trees referenced above continue along the frontage of the park and have the effect of ‘linking’ the street scene on this side of High Street.

On the opposite side of High Street is a terrace of attractive Grade II Listed Buildings of slightly differing forms and status but having a unifying Georgian style. Immediately opposite the site where the extension would be located is No 6 High Street which features a stucco faced elevation with raised window banding and a central porch with crenelated parapet.



#### **View from site to Listed Buildings**

This range of buildings is subject to a composite listing which is shown below:

##### *HIGH STREET*

*1.*

*1814*

*Nos 1 to 11 (consec)*

*(All with iron railings  
to front steps)*

*NX 9718 SE 5/57*

*II GV*

*2.*

*Mid-C18 terrace of 2 storeyed small houses. Cornice. Nos 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and 11 are pebble-dashed, the others stuccoed. All have doors up a flight of steps with iron railings, No 6 has banded triple columns to porch with entablature and embattled parapet; No 7 has Tuscan 3 quarter columns to doorcase with open pediment. Nos 6 and 7 have 4 sash windows in upper storey (each), those of No 6 being in moulded frames. Other houses have 2 sashes each to upper floor.*

*Nos 1 to 11 (consec) form a group. Listing NGR: NX9764518456*

The proposed extension would follow a similar architectural style to the existing school but with some contrast details in order to create a visual 'bookend' to the otherwise relatively featureless school frontage.

## **2.0 Assessment of Significance**

The subject building is of no real architectural merit and arguably offers little in terms of making a positive contribution to the conservation area. Architecturally, it is quite at odds to the Georgian street scene on the opposite side of High Street however this is an accident of timing as its construction precedes the date when conservation area status was conferred.

However there is in general a fairly strong degree of separation between both street scenes created by distance, the intervening road, the school boundary treatment, the drop in levels and the presence of mature trees. In reality the two sides of the street will tend to be viewed as separate entities rather than parts of a whole despite being in the same designated area.

Nevertheless, the status of the conservation area and presence of listed buildings is recognised and has been considered when preparing the proposals so as not to create something that would 'jar' or unduly stand out.

## **3.0 Design**

The proposal is predicated on the pressing need to provide additional teaching space to meet ever growing demand at the school.

Given the architectural style and form of the existing school there is no opportunity to provide a 'nod' to the Georgian buildings on the opposite side of the street without appearing contrived.

The design therefore focusses on simplicity, subordination, and seeking to create a bookend (or what might be termed a 'full stop') to an otherwise unresolved frontage. To achieve this, materials have been varied from brick to render and a strong colour (dark grey) is proposed for the glazing elements in contrast to the white finish used in the existing building. The intention here is to avoid the 'framing' effect of the white windows which tends to emphasise the openings.

The white UPVC fascia has however been continued in order to unite the extension with the existing building.

The intention is to create an extension which whilst bookending the linear form of the existing building by introducing some vertical emphasis is nevertheless subdued in respect to the context of its wider setting.

#### 4.0 Impact of Proposal

The proposal addresses a number of perceived deficiencies in the design of the existing school frontage, as well as meeting the more practical requirements of the school.

In general terms the proposal follows the 'modern' style of the existing building which is arguably at odds with the conservation area setting. This however is intentional so as not to deliberately draw attention to the new extension.

Given the natural screening provided by the trees, the existing boundary treatment, and the opportunity taken to improve the overall appearance of the school frontage, it is considered that the proposal will not cause any material harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Signed: *JSC Underwood* Jonathan Underwood BSc (Hons) MRICS  
(Agent) 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022