

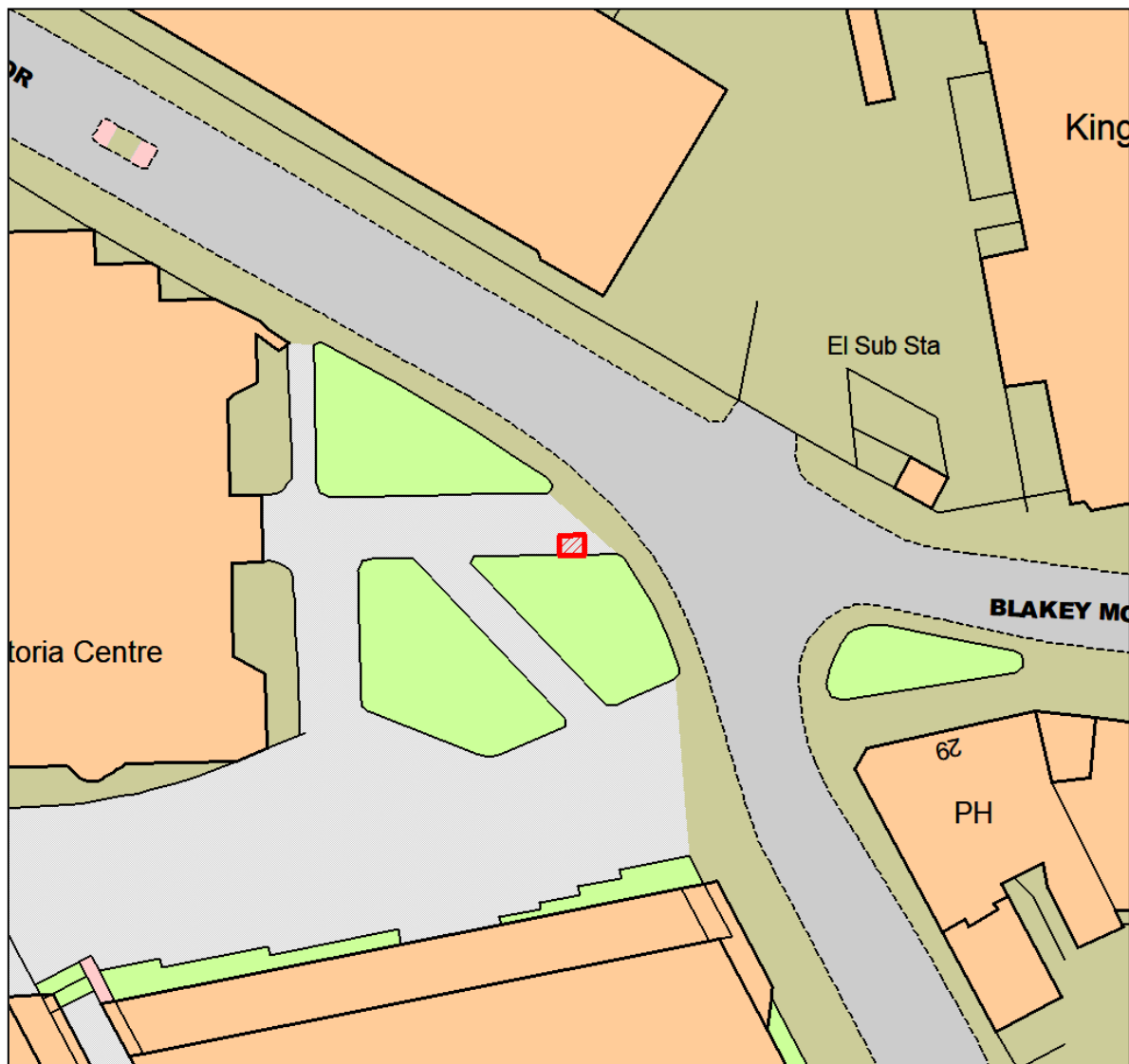
Proposed development: Full Planning Application (Regulation 3) for: The erection of a free standing bronze statue of Barbara Castle and stone memorial.

**Site address:
Jubilee Square
Blakey Moor
Blackburn**

Applicant: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Ward: Blackburn Central

**Councillor Zamir Khan
Councillor Mahfooz Hussain
Councillor Samim Desai**



1.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVE – Subject to conditions, as set out in paragraph 4.1.

2.0 KEY ISSUES/SUMMARY OF PLANNING BALANCE

- 2.1 The application is reported to Committee on account of the Council's interest in the development, as the applicant, the land owner and the developer.
- 2.2 Assessment of the application finds that the proposal corresponds with the Council's strategic approach to built and cultural heritage, as set out in the Core Strategy and Local Plan Part 2, through delivery of a high quality development which signifies the history of the Borough, enhances the Jubilee Square Public Realm, and the wider Northgate Conservation Area within Blackburn Town Centre. Moreover, from a technical point of view, all issues have been addressed through the application, subject to standard planning conditions.

3.0 RATIONALE

3.1 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1.1 The Application Site (the site) is located in the newly remodelled Jubilee Square to the east of the front elevation of the Victoria Technical School which is within the wider Northgate Conservation Area (designated in 1994) of the town centre,. The Square comprises a broad central stone pavement from the buildings entrance to Blakey Moor which is flanked by grassed areas edged with granite. The public realm improvements and remodelling of Jubilee Square form part of the new Reel Cinema development and extend the environmental improvements recently undertaken at Blakey Moor and Northgate as part of the Townscape Heritage Project.
- 3.1.2 To the rear (west) of the site and Jubilee Square is the Grade II Listed Victoria Technical School. To the east sits the Grade II Listed King George's Hall, to the north is the historic Blakey Moor Building, to the south is the large development containing Reel Cinema and to the south-east is the Victorian Blakey Moor Terrace. Jubilee Square is bounded on the east by Blakey Moor and on the south by the pedestrianised Nab Lane.

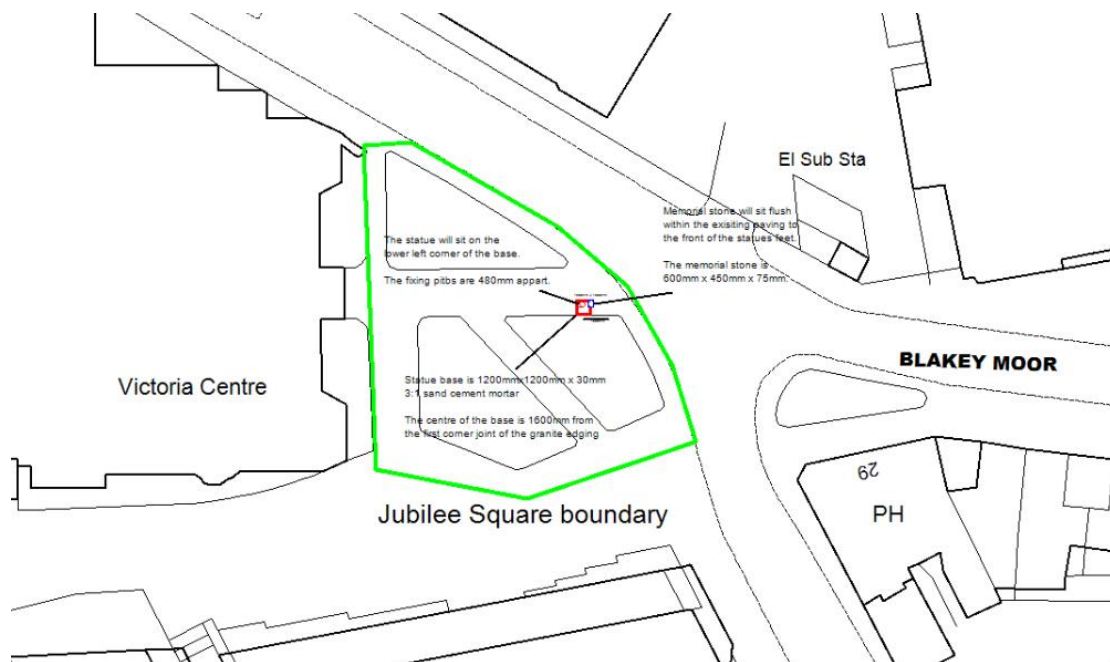
3.2 Proposed Development

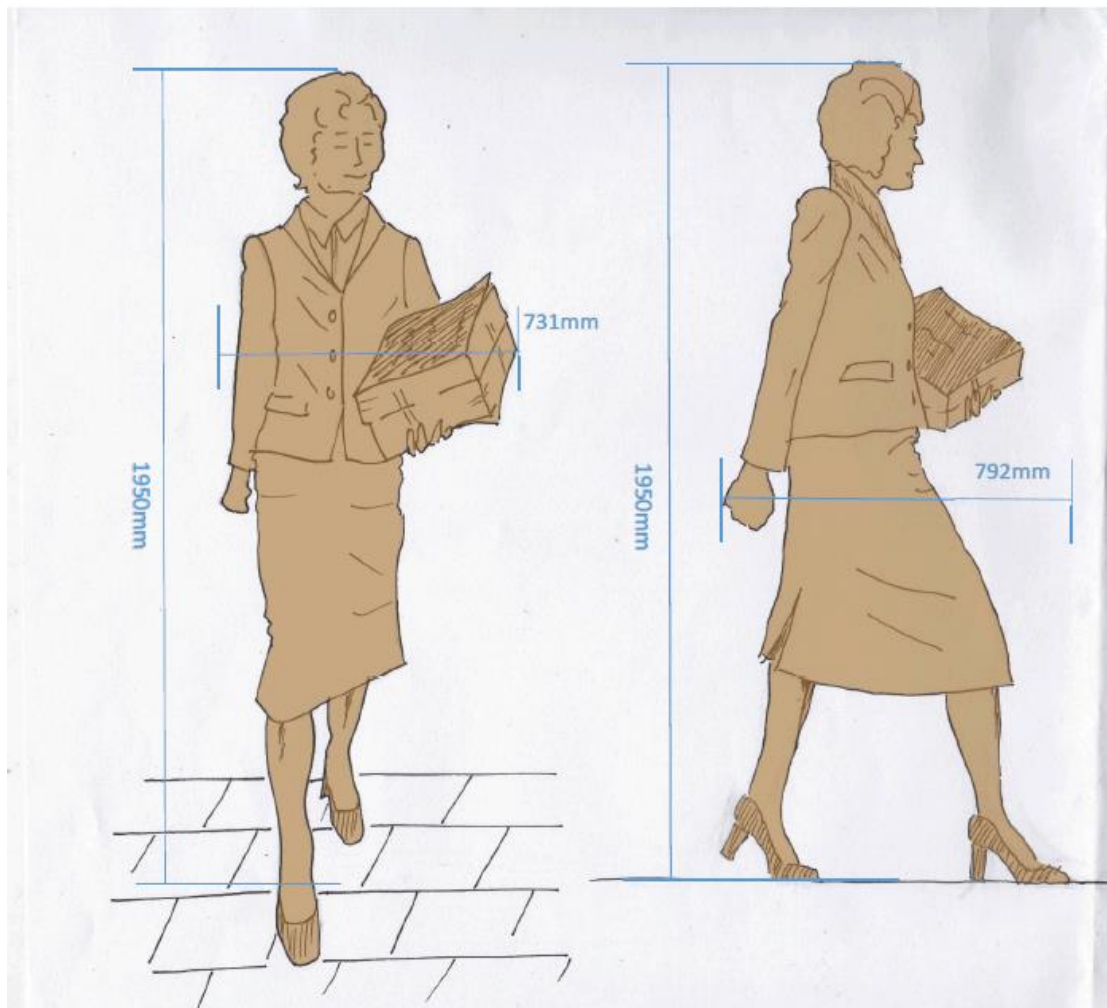
- 3.2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the erection of free-standing bronze statue of Barbara Castle and stone memorial. The statue will be 150% life size, 6ft 4 inches tall and 200kg. This is slightly larger than life scale to ensure that she is not lost among the setting and the surrounding buildings.
- 3.2.2 The statue will be installed flush on the paving and anchored to a 1200mm x 1200mm x 30mm 3:1 sand cement mortar base that has already been

installed under the paving at the Development Site. To the front of the statue will be a 600mm x 450mm x 30mm integrated memorial stone, hand engraved with the following inscription:

*“Barbara Castle, 1910–2002
MP for Blackburn 1945-79 and
bold campaigner for equal rights.”*

3.2.3 The following site plan and image indicate the proposed position of the statue and its pose, respectively:





3.2.4 Recognising the context to the proposal; Barbara Castle, Baroness Castle of Blackburn, (6 October 1910 – 3 May 2002), was elected to Parliament as MP for Blackburn at the 1945 election. She remained an MP until 1979 making her one of the longest serving female MPs in British history and one which was regarded as one of the most significant Labour Party politicians.

3.3 Development Plan

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

3.3.2 The Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy and adopted Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies. In determining the current proposal the following are considered to be the most relevant policies:

3.3.3 Core Strategy

- CS17 – Built and Cultural Heritage

3.3.4 Local Plan Part 2

- Policy 7 – Sustainable and Viable Development
- Policy 8 – Amenity
- Policy 11 – Design
- Policy 27 – Town Centres – a Framework for Development
- Policy 39 – Heritage

3.4 **Other Material Planning Considerations**

3.4.1 Northgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2009.

This appraisal has been produced following a detailed study and assessment of Northgate Conservation Area, in recognition of the area's historical development and archaeological significance. The appraisal identifies important features (such as buildings, streets, views and open spaces) and explains why the conservation area is special. It also identifies and considers issues which detract from these important features and / or are threatening to harm the area's unique character.

3.4.2 Northgate Conservation Area Development Guide 2009.

The purpose of this development guide is to outline how the buildings, streets and places within Northgate Conservation Area can be conserved, improved and developed to enhance the area's special qualities.

3.4.3 Blackburn Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The SPD adds targeted detail, guidance and clarification to the suite of documents comprising the Blackburn with Darwen Development Plan, where it applies to Blackburn Town Centre.

3.4.4 National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)

The Framework provides the Government's national planning policy, including a very strong emphasis on conserving and enhancing the historic environment, set out in Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

3.4.5 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

3.5 Assessment

3.5.1 The Development Plan reaffirms The Framework's principles of sustainability which includes support for development which conserves and enhances the built environment, subject to the principles of high quality design.

3.5.2 In assessing this application, the following important materials considerations have been taken into account:

- Principle of the development;
- Built and Cultural Heritage Impact;
- Design – Layout and Character / Appearance.

3.5.3 Principle

In land use terms, the principle of the development is accepted, in accordance with The Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should proceed without delay, unless impacts which significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of a proposal are identified; subject to assessment of the following matters:

3.5.4 Built and Cultural Heritage

A Heritage Statement is submitted with the application, required by virtue of the sites position relative to Heritage Assets identified as Northgate Conservation Area (CA) Grade II Listed Buildings: The Victoria Technical School and King Georges Hall. The statement provides an overview of these assets, their significance and the impact of the proposal on the character of the CA and setting of the Listed Buildings. The Framework defines a Heritage Asset as:

"A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest."

3.5.5 The statement also considers the Non-Designated Heritage Asset of the statue of William Gladstone (1809 – 1898), positioned at the axis of Blakey Moor, Northgate and New Market Street, within the CA.

Policy 39 requires development with the potential to affect designated or non-designated heritage assets to sustain or enhance the significance of the asset. To aid assessment, the proposal is supported by submission of a Heritage Statement. The key heritage issues to consider are:

1. Whether the proposed development will harm the character or appearance of the Northgate Conservation Area; and
2. Whether the proposed development will harm the contribution made by the setting to the nearby Grade II listed buildings.

3.5.6 The location of the proposed statue is towards the western boundary of the CA, in an area containing a significant view from Northgate along Blakey Moor, which ends at a focal point of Victoria Technical School (Jubilee

Square). The recently created public / civic space (Jubilee Square) is surrounded by attractive buildings identified in the CA Appraisal as being notable buildings / features that contribute positively to the CA, including some listed buildings. In this regard, although the area contains some modern additions, overall, this part of the CA has historic value and for the purpose of this assessment is of moderate significance. It consists primarily of architecturally interesting and attractive nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial and municipal buildings. In addition, the area has been subject to ongoing environmental improvement works to the existing historic buildings, vacant plots and public realm as part of the town's regeneration.

- 3.5.7 The CA Development Guide notes that the integration of art should be encouraged. Accordingly, the proposal, although a notable addition to the street scene, will clearly be viewed as a memorial and a piece of artwork with important historic and social links to the area. In this context it is considered that the introduction of the statue will not cause any harm to the character or appearance of the CA.
- 3.5.8 Turning to impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings; the key issue is whether the proposal would harm the setting of the Grade II Listed Buildings / structures, which should be regarded as being of high significance. The proposal will be positioned directly opposite the Victoria Technical School and adjacent to King Georges Hall, with a visual connection made between the three features. The listed phone kiosk adjacent to the Public House at no. 35 Northgate will also be visually linked. Primarily, the statue will be experienced in the same setting as the Victoria Technical School when viewed from Blakey Moor and Northgate. However, due to its limited size and scale as well as its position towards the edge of Jubilee Square, any impact on the views of the former Technical School will be negligible.
- 3.5.9 Similarly, any impact to the view / appreciation of King Georges Hall will be minimal and in context with the surrounding urban setting.
- 3.5.10 There will be no negative impact to the setting of the listed phone kiosk or the statue of William Gladstone.
- 3.5.11 It should be recognised that the wider setting of the listed buildings has been improved recently with a modernised public realm. Whilst the new square forms part of the important open views to the listed buildings, it has limited historical connection to them. The wider surroundings, street pattern and general urban layout has largely remained intact and provides a cumulative value to the wider historic setting. In this regard, it is considered that the statue would be an appropriate introduction into the Civic space and the significance of the group setting will be sustained.
- 3.5.12 The proposal would, therefore, meet the statutory test to 'preserve' and would cause no harm to both the character and appearance of the CA nor to the contribution made by the setting to the significance of the Grade II listed buildings. Consequently, no balancing exercise is required, as set out in The Framework at paragraph 196. As such, the proposal meets the objectives of Policy 39 and The Framework.

3.5.13 Considered in the context of the Local Plan's design objectives relating to the Public Realm, as set out in Policy 10, the proposal is considered to make a significant visual contribution to the space that would stimulate public interest, without prejudice to functionality or legibility.

3.5.14 Summary

This report assesses the full planning application for the erection of a free-standing bronze statue of Barbara Castle and stone memorial. In considering the proposal, all necessary material considerations have been taken into account, including the statutory duty imposed by s.66(1) and s.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and CA's. This report finds that the proposal meets the policy requirements of the Blackburn with Darwen Core Strategy, Local Plan Part 2, supporting Planning Documents and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Approve.

Delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director of Place to approve planning permission, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Unless explicitly required by condition within this consent, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the proposal received 17th June 2021, including drawing numbered: JBSQ-CAP-XX-00-DR-L-15-1100 and additional information received 23rd June 2021.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to clarify which plans are relevant to the consent.

5.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 5.1 No relevant planning history exists for the site.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 Heritage

No objection:

Assessment

I have reviewed the supporting documents, which includes the site plans, statue design details and a Heritage Statement, prepared by the Townscape Heritage Project on behalf of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and the Barbara Castle Statue Campaign Group.

Impact to the Conservation Area

The issues from a conservation perspective is whether the proposal will harm the character and appearance of the Northgate Conservation Area. Northgate Conservation Area was originally designated in 1994. The special interest of Northgate Conservation Area is derived largely from its collection of fine nineteenth and twentieth century municipal, retail and commercial buildings including the Town Hall, Central Police Station and Courthouse and the Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.

The location of the proposed statue is towards the western boundary of the Northgate Conservation Area, in an area containing a significant view from Northgate along Blakey Moor, which ends at a focal point of the former Technical School (Jubilee Square). The recently created public/ civic space (Jubilee Square) is surrounded by attractive buildings identified in the CA Appraisal as being notable buildings/features that contribute positively to the CA; including some listed buildings. In this regard, although the area contains some modern additions, overall, this part of the CA has historic value and for the purpose of this assessment is of moderate significance.

In my view, this part of the CA consists primarily of architecturally interesting and attractive nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial and municipal buildings. In addition, the area has been subject to ongoing works to improve the existing historic buildings, vacant plots and public realm as part of the town's regeneration.

The Northgate Conservation Area Development Guides notes that the integration of art and that it should be encouraged. As such, the proposal for a statue, although a notable addition to the street scene, will clearly be viewed as a memorial and a piece of artwork with important historic and social links to the area.

In this context I do not feel the introduction of the statue will cause any harm to the character or appearance of the Northgate Conservation Area.

Impact on the Setting of the Listed Buildings

The issue from a heritage viewpoint is whether the proposal would harm the setting of the Grade II Listed Buildings/structures, which should be regarded as being of high significance.

Historic England's advice on setting is contained in its Planning Note 3 (second edition) entitled The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017), which describes the setting as being the surrounding's in which a heritage asset is experienced and explains that this

may be more extensive than its immediate curtilage and need not be confined to areas which have public access.

Mindful of the above guidance, the proposal site lies directly opposite the former Technical College and adjacent to King Georges Hall. Whilst visiting the site, it is clear that the proposal site and the Grade II listed buildings are visually connected (including the listed phone kiosk). The statue will be experienced in the same setting as the Victoria Technical School when viewed from Blakey Moor and Northgate. However, due to the limited size and scale of the statue and position towards the edge of Jubilee Square, any impact on the views of the former Technical School will be negligible.

Similarly, any impact to the view/appreciation of King Georges Hall will be minimal and in context with the surrounding urban setting.

There will be any negative impact to the setting of the listed phone kiosk. The wider setting of the listed buildings has been improved recently with the modern additions and upgraded modern public realm. Whilst the new square forms part of the important open views to the listed buildings, it has limited historical connection to them. The wider surroundings, street pattern and general urban layout has largely remained intact and provides a cumulative value to the wider historic setting. In this regard, the new statue seems to be an appropriate introduction into the Civic space and the significance of the group setting will be sustained.

Subsequently, the proposal will have no negative impact on the contribution made by the historic setting on the significance of any of the heritage assets.

Overall, the proposal will cause no harm to both the character and appearance of the Northgate Conservation Area nor to the contribution made by the setting to the significance of the Grade II listed buildings.

Conclusion / recommendation

As I am required to do so, I have given the duty's imposed by s.66(1) and s.72(1) of the P(LBCA) Act 1990 considerable weight in my comments.

I consider the proposal would meet the statutory test 'to preserve' and would cause no harm to both the character and appearance of the Northgate Conservation Area nor to the contribution made by the setting to the significance of the Grade II listed buildings. Therefore, no balancing exercise is required as per NPPF P.196. As such, the proposal meets the objectives of Chapter 16 of the NPPF and accord with the policies of the Local Plan.

6.2 Public consultation

Consultation was carried out by means of site notices displayed on 22nd June 2021 and publication of a press notice on 23rd June 2021. No comments were received.

7.0 CONTACT OFFICER: Nick Blackledge - [Senior Planner]

8.0 DATE PREPARED: 1st July 2021.