

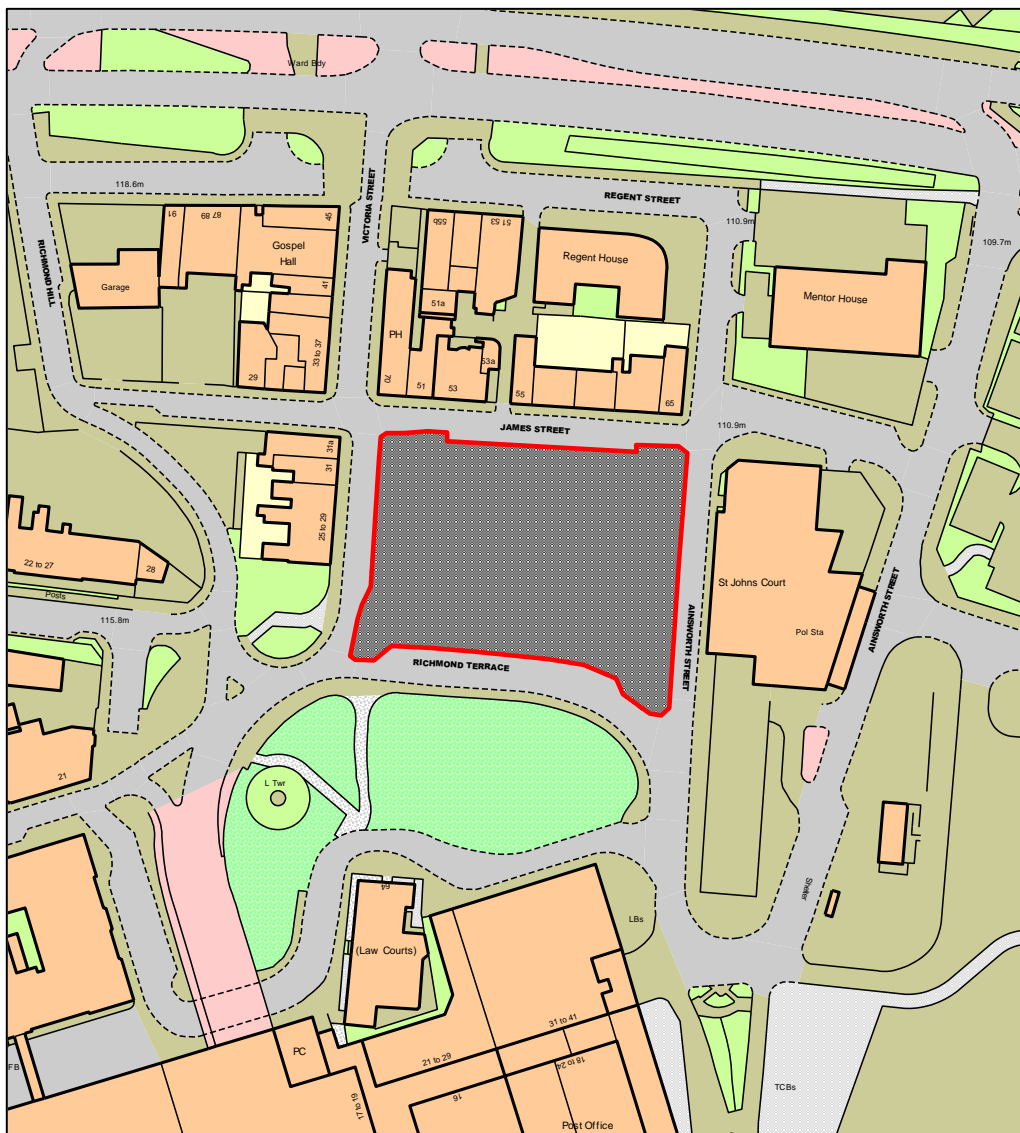
**Proposed Development: Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent:  
Conversion and extension of existing Grade II Listed Church to provide office  
accommodation**

**Site Address: St Johns Centre, Victoria Street, Blackburn**

**Applicant: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council**

**Ward: Blackburn Central**

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



## **1.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 The proposed development is recommended to be granted both Full Planning Permission (10/23/0777) and Listed Building Consent (10/23/0778), subject to the conditions and informative note detailed in Section 5.

## **2.0 KEY ISSUES/SUMMARY OF PLANNING BALANCE**

- 2.1 These applications are presented to the Planning and Highways Committee, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, and given that the applications are made on behalf of the Council.
- 2.2 The proposed development has been publicised through letters to residents and occupants of the nearest 58 adjacent properties on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023. In addition, two site notices were displayed on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023. No public comments have been received for the application so far. Should any comments be received ahead of the committee meeting they will be presented as part of a committee update report.
- 2.3 The Council's development plan supports new employment and heritage developments, provided they constitute sustainable development and accord with the development plan when taken as a whole.
- 2.4 The proposed developments involve the complete refurbishment of the fire damaged Grade II listed St John the Evangelist Church. The proposals involve converting the church into a flexible work space, providing offices, meeting rooms and lettable desks. A number of external works are proposed to facilitate the refurbishment including the construction of a new roof, the installation of new windows and internal remodelling.
- 2.5 On balance, the proposals would be satisfactory from a technical point of view, with all issues having been addressed through the application process, or capable of being controlled or mitigated through appropriately worded planning conditions.
- 2.6 The key issues to be addressed in determining this application are as follows;
- Principle of Development
  - Heritage Assets
  - Archaeology
  - Design and Visual Amenity
  - Residential Amenity
  - Highways and Parking
  - Arboricultural Considerations
  - Ecological Considerations
  - Drainage Considerations
  - Land Contamination
  - Wider Sustainability Benefits
  - Crime Management

### 3.0 RATIONALE

#### 3.1 Site and Surroundings

3.1.1 As detailed above, the application site is a Grade II listed building that is currently in a state of disrepair following a significant fire in April 2019. The site is located within Blackburn Town Centre and the Richmond Terrace Conservation Area. Mixed-use buildings surround to three sides with an open landscaped area positioned to the south. 51 – 53 James Street to the north and 25 – 31 Victoria Street to the west are also Grade II listed buildings.

Figure One – Location Plan and Satellite Image

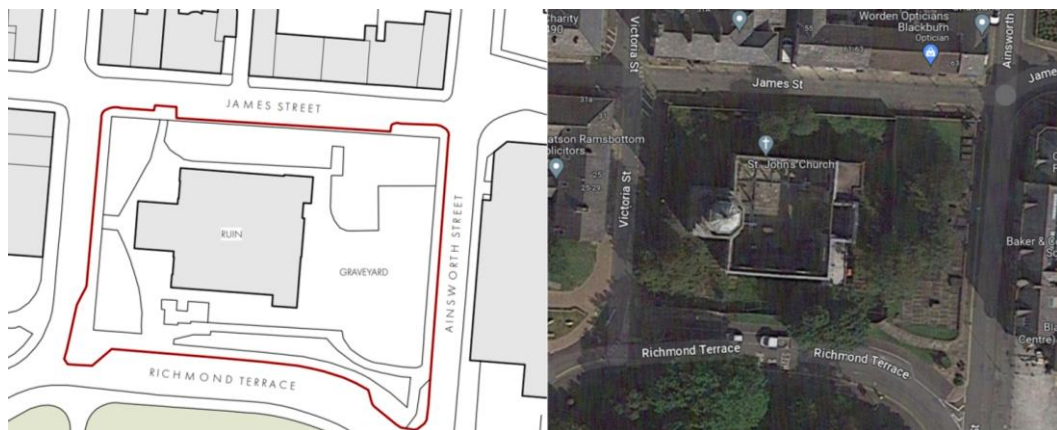


Figure Two - Site Photographs (taken 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023)







3.1.2 The site covers an area of circa 0.8 acres and it is located on Victoria Street, in the northern part of Blackburn Town Centre. The site is located on a rectangular plot bounded by James St, Ainsworth St, Victoria St and Richmond Terrace. The site includes a churchyard, historical burial places and a number of mature trees, which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order area (Blackburn Town Centre TPO 1991 – Old 37A1).

3.1.3 The church was completed in 1789. Limestone forms its main body. It has a rectangular plan with a square tower at its west and chancel projection to the east. The Vestry was added in 1865 with the galleries and chancel additions in 1891. The building contains features including cill band, Doric columns, pedimented tripartite windows and semi-circular clerestory lights. A number of stained glass windows also survived the fire, which depict a number of saints and religious figures.

## 3.2 Proposed Development

3.2.1 As detailed above, the proposals seek consent for the renovation and re-use of the currently derelict Grade II listed St John the Evangelist church, to provide office accommodation. The proposals involve converting the church into flexible workspace, providing offices, meeting rooms and lettable desks. Landscaping works are also proposed throughout the churchyard.

3.2.2 The redevelopment will see the creation of four floors utilising space in the former church and its belltower. The design includes the creation of a new pitched roof with a series of rooflights to all four sides to replace the Victorian structure lost in the fire. The new roof would utilise modern materials such as

standing seam zinc to the pitched roof areas, and anodized cappings/cladding; highlighted as ‘to provide a suitable contrast between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ whilst ensuring the modern design of the new element is of a suitable high standard and not pastiche’. The pitched roof terminates at a ring of clerestory glazing to the central office accommodation above which sits a flat roof.

Figure Three – Proposed Visualisation and East Elevation



3.2.3 Internally, the proposed reconfiguration includes the creation of a new staircase and a wheelchair accessible lift to ensure access throughout the building for all users. The first floor would be formed by a mezzanine level, with glazed fronted office spaces. The second floor would provide a series of cellular office spaces. These would sit partially within the pitched roof and would be set back on the east side providing views of the chancel and height to the amenity spaces. The third floor would predominantly be a glazed extension that breaks the line of the pitched roof, providing more cellular office accommodation.

Figure Four – Proposed Ground Floor Plan



3.2.4 Modern interventions that are detrimental to the significance of the building would be removed, whilst historic fabric would be retained and repaired, specifically decorative plasterwork, joinery, the cast-iron/timber clad columns in the main nave, and the decorative plasterwork ceiling on the ground floor of the

tower. The existing floor coverings would be removed and reused. The existing historic floor and roof structures in the tower would be retained and repaired. Similarly, the stone bull-nose stairs on the ground floor of the tower and cantilevered stone stairs on the first and second stages of the tower would be retained, repaired and enhanced accordingly.

3.2.5 Externally, an extensive scheme of repair would be undertaken to the masonry shell of the building including some rebuilding of parapets, new stone indents where details and weathering's have been lost, redressing and defrassing stone, full repointing of all elevations and new leadwork to strings, ledges, pediments and parapets. The remaining stained glass and plain leaded windows would be cleaned and repaired. The surviving timber windows and louvres would also be repaired.

3.2.6 Additionally, new anodised aluminium framed fixed light windows would be installed in the existing clerestory openings. The existing historic doors, frames, architraves and historic ironmongery would be repaired. Existing ramps and railings would be removed with new access ramps and paths installed. The existing grave slabs and monuments within the churchyard would be repaired and combined with a new landscaping scheme. New planting, including shrubs, hedges and wildflower grasses would be included as part of the scheme.

**Figure Five – Proposed Landscaping Scheme**



### 3.3 Case Officer Site Photos – taken 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023



### 3.4 Development Plan

#### 3.4.1 Core Strategy:

- Policy CS2: Typology of Employment Land
- Policy CS16: Form and Design
- Policy CS17: Built and Cultural Heritage

#### 3.4.2 Local Plan Part 2 (2015):

- Policy 1: The Urban Boundary
- Policy 7: Sustainable and Viable Development
- Policy 8: Development and People
- Policy 9: Development and the Environment
- Policy 10: Accessibility and Transport
- Policy 11: Design
- Policy 26: Town Centres – a Framework for Development
- Policy 36: Climate Change
- Policy 39: Heritage

#### 3.4.3 Local Plan (Emerging) 2021-2037

- Policy CP2: Urban Boundary
- Policy CP5: Climate Change
- Policy CP6: The Natural Environment
- Policy CP7: The Historic Environment
- Policy CP8. Securing High Quality and Inclusive Design
- Policy CP9: Transport and Accessibility
- Policy CP11: Town Centres and Commercial Development
- Policy DM2: Protecting Living and Working Environments
- Policy DM12: Clean and Green Energy



- Policy DM13: Flooding/SuDS
- Policy DM17: Trees and Woodland
- Policy DM26: Heritage Assets
- Policy DM27: Design in New Developments
- Policy DM33: Town Centres

#### 3.4.4 Blackburn Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2018)

#### 3.4.5 Blackburn with Darwen Parking Standards (2014)

- Standalone Office Buildings: 1 car space per 35 sqm.

### **4.0 ASSESSMENT**

#### 4.1 Principle of Development

4.1.1 The proposed development involves the provision of flexible office space within Blackburn Town Centre. Core Policy CS2 states that Blackburn Town Centre will be considered a suitable location for employment development including offices. Those requirements are underpinned by Policy 26. Therefore, the proposed redevelopment of the church to provide office use is compliant with the objectives of Policies CS2, 1 and 26 together with the Blackburn Town Centre SPD.

4.1.2 The Emerging Local Plan also identifies Blackburn Town Centre as the principal location for new commercial development, with the eastern investment area highlighted as key to supporting the development of skills and local businesses. For those reasons, the proposed development is acceptable in principle, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies CP2, CP11 and DM33.

4.1.3 In accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development detailed in the Framework, and Policy 7, development proposals should proceed without delay, unless impacts which significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal are identified; subject to assessment of the following matters;

#### 4.2 Heritage Assets

4.2.1 As detailed above, St John the Evangelist Church is a Grade II listed building that is located adjacent to other Grade II listed buildings and within the Richmond Terrace Conservation Area. All of those features are designated heritage assets for the purposes of heritage policy. Policy CS17 encourages the retention, re-use or conversion of key assets, and the integration and promotion of the Borough's cultural assets. Policy 39 requires all development proposals that have the potential to affect any designated heritage asset, either directly or indirectly, including by reference to their setting, to sustain or enhance the significance of the asset. Those requirements are underpinned by Policies CP7 and DM26.

- 4.2.2 These proposals have been subject to comprehensive pre-application discussions over the past 18 months. A number of concessions have been made to appease the concerns of the Georgian Group. The proposals are supported by a Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment together with a number of other technical documents that appraise the need for the proposed works alongside their heritage impacts. A review of the proposals has been undertaken by the BwD Heritage Advisor, the Georgian Group and Historic Buildings and Places. It should be noted at this stage that no objections have been raised by any of those consultees and they are broadly supportive of the proposals.
- 4.2.3 As detailed above, the church has been substantially damaged by fire and these proposals provide a valuable opportunity to resurrect it and reinstate much of its former glory. Fortunately, the building broadly retains its architectural form. Many original features within the external shell and tower are intact. The properties significance lies in its architectural (aesthetic), historical and communal context, primarily evidenced in the building's retained fabric and architectural form/appearance. In this regard, the listed building can be attributed as having a high significance in the context of the requirements of the aforementioned heritage policies.
- 4.2.4 The most noticeable proposed visible change to the building would be the construction of the new roof. The first part of the proposed new roof would be finished in grey standing seam zinc but the feature would follow a similar profile to that of the original roof. Beyond this the roof would be raised to provide additional office space. The lantern style windows would be a highly noticeable change to the form and appearance of the building. That said, it is acknowledged that a modern approach is required for this project when the current condition of the building is considered alongside the wider viability issues.
- 4.2.5 The use of modern materials will clearly differentiate the old from the new. Additionally, the two core elements that would rise through the roof and clerestory for the mechanical plant and lift overrun (to service and enable the new use), would be partly screened from view as they would be positioned between the belltower and the proposed raised up section of new roof. This outcome would greatly reduce their visibility and wider impact. Appropriate external materials and finishes are also proposed for the new roof. A condition is recommended to ensure the new roof is implemented in accordance with the submitted materials details in order to ensure a satisfactory form of development is achieved.
- 4.2.6 The rest of the exterior features would be predominantly retained, with the addition of fixed aluminium windows utilising the existing half-moon clerestory window openings. Internally, whilst the proposed new floors, lift shaft and staircase would be modern, the proposed first-floor mezzanine would adequately reflect the historic galleries and positively respond to the layout of the existing building. This design would also provide a sense of openness and height, like the church would have had previously. Equally, the setback nature of the second floor on the east side continues the view of the chancel and

openness with the glazing providing further views. The submission is supported by evidence documents confirming that the internal space and key features are appreciated within the scheme. Although some relatively significant internal changes are proposed, they can be justified when the current condition of the building and overarching objectives of the refurbishment project are taken into account.

- 4.2.7 Additionally, the proposals include the retention and repair of the existing fabric including its windows, all of which are positive elements of the proposed work. Where windows glass/frames are to be replaced/repared, a condition is recommended regarding the submission of further details including materials, styles and profiles. Further conditions are recommended regarding the submission of technical details for the proposed secondary glazing and a methodology for the cleaning and repair of any retained windows.
- 4.2.8 Regarding wider heritage impacts, a number of listed buildings are positioned nearby and the site contributes positively to the setting of those buildings. Largely, the proposals involve the retention and repair the existing parts of the building, which would enhance its contribution to the setting of nearby listed buildings. However, the proposed new roof will be a noticeable addition to the building, particularly the raised part from the lantern windows upwards and the two core elements that rise through the roof and clerestory for the mechanical plant and lift overrun, which do not follow a similar profile to that of the roof that was lost in the fire.
- 4.2.9 That said, this modern roof structure would only be easily viewed from the immediate north and south of the proposal site and when viewing from the east. Similarly, when viewing the other listed buildings and their setting, to the west, the tower would largely screen the raised core elements, and the visibility of the new roof as a whole would be more limited as it is screened by intervening buildings. It should also be noted that the south and east of the proposal site has been substantially modernised over the years with the modern shopping centre, surface car parks and multi-storey buildings, which have all eroded the wider historical setting somewhat.
- 4.2.10 In the above context, whilst the proposed new roof would follow a similar profile to that of the roof lost in the fire, the modern additions that sit higher, would be a noticeable addition and contrast to the historic aesthetic significance of the setting of the listed buildings. Nevertheless, given the distance of some of the listed buildings and the screening from intervening buildings and mature trees the harm caused will be negligible, with the exception of the closest listed buildings on James Street and Victoria Street. In their case, the visual impact would be more noticeable and some slight harm would be caused to the setting of those buildings. The same outcome is also applicable to the setting of the Richmond Terrace Conservation Area, as noted in the comments provided by the BwD Heritage Advisor.
- 4.2.11 When considered collectively, the proposals would cause some degree of harm to the historical significance of the site, adjacent listed buildings and conservation area. In this situation, Policy 39 states that such forms of

development will only be permitted where the impact is outweighed by the public benefit arising from the development. Where some impact on significance is considered acceptable, the Council will require a programme to be implemented of recording the asset in its original condition, prior to any work being carried out.

4.2.12 For clarity, the latter part of those requirements have already been partly satisfied through the submission of an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment. When considering public benefits, a multitude would be provided by these proposals. In addition to the repair and refurbishment of a currently derelict listed building within a prominent town centre location, a number of commercial benefits would also be provided once the development becomes operational.

4.2.13 Conclusively, those benefits would far outweigh the slight harm that would be caused to the historical significance of heritage assets. On that basis, and subject to compliance with the aforementioned conditions, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to heritage assets, in accordance with the relevant requirements Policies, CS17, 39, CP7 and DM26.

#### 4.3 Archaeology

4.3.1 The site houses an abundance of archaeological remains owing to its former use. Policy 39 requires development with the potential to affect nationally or locally important archaeological remains is expected to better reveal and increase understanding of those remains and their settings, unless it is demonstrated that this is not possible or desirable. Those requirements are also underpinned by Policy DM26.

4.3.2 As detailed above, an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment supports the application. LCC Archaeology have reviewed the submitted assessment and the merits of the application as a whole. No objections have been raised yet some discrepancies have been identified in the findings of the assessment with regards to the potential presence of unrecorded inhumations. Therefore, a condition has been advised regarding the submission of a programme of archaeological works and a formal watching brief, which is recommended to be added. Subject to compliance with that condition, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to archaeology, in accordance with the relevant requirements Policies 39 and DM26.

#### 4.4 Design and Visual Amenity

4.4.1 The application site is a standalone feature architecturally. It is positioned within a cluster of historic buildings with more modern buildings positioned further afield to the south. Policy CS16 requires all new development to be of a high standard of design, and to respect and reinforce local character. Policy 11 requires all new development to demonstrate an understanding of the wider context and make a positive contribution to the local area. Those requirements are underpinned by Policies CP8 and DM27.

4.4.2 A full heritage appraisal of the development is detailed above in Section 4.2. A positive outcome in that respect also ensures compliance with aforementioned design policies regarding the works to the building itself. Regarding landscaping, an acceptable scheme has been submitted following the receipt of the comments by the BwD Arboricultural Advisor.

4.4.3 The scheme has been sensitively designed around the existing features within the site alongside its historic use. A condition is recommended to ensure the development is landscaped in accordance with the submitted scheme. Subject to compliance with that condition, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to design and visual amenity, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies CS16, 11, CP8 and DM27.

#### 4.5 Residential Amenity

4.5.1 Residential buildings are positioned to the north on James Street and safeguarding the amenities of those neighbours is an important material planning consideration. Policy 8 states that all development proposals should secure a satisfactory level of amenity for surrounding occupants in relation to noise, vibration, odour, light, dust, other pollution or nuisance, privacy/overlooking, and the general relationship between buildings. Those requirements are underpinned by Policy DM2.

4.5.2 Owing to ample separation, the massing of the proposed roof lift would not appear overbearing to the neighbours on James Street. The levels of separation and nature of the proposed end use would prevent any materially harmful privacy implications for those neighbours. Furthermore, the proposals involve the provision of office space, which is a low-intensity use when considering the potential for noise impacts.

4.5.3 Conditions are recommended to control construction working hours and the logistics of the construction phase. Such conditions are necessary to minimise noise impacts for neighbours during that phase of the development. Subject to compliance with those conditions, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to residential amenity, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 8 and DM2.

#### 4.6 Highways and Parking

4.6.1 The site occupies a town centre location with an abundance of parking opportunities and regular public transport links positioned nearby. Policy 10 outlines a general requirement for all development proposals to not prejudice road safety, or the safe, efficient and convenient movement of all highway users. Those requirements are underpinned by Policy CP9. Parking should also be provided in accordance with the adopted Parking Standards, where achievable.

4.6.2 A Transport Statement has been submitted in support of the application. BwD Highways have reviewed the submitted statement and the application as a whole. No objections have been raised. There is no requirement to clarify

serving arrangements when the nature of the proposed end use is taken into account. Servicing can only take place from the highway and that is the historic arrangement of the site.

- 4.6.3 The site has no off-street vehicle parking provisions or appropriate land to provide such facilities. That said, such an outcome is not a cause for a concern with this site when its town centre location is taken into account. 14 cycle racks are proposed internally, which is acceptable for the scale and type of the development proposed.
- 4.6.4 Following submission of the application the applicant has expressed an intention for the cycle racks to be located externally in order to remove the fire risks associated with the charging of electric bikes. The area to the north of the belltower would likely provide a suitable place for such provisions. A condition is recommended to control those details.
- 4.6.5 The previously recommended condition to control the logistics of the construction phase is also necessary on highways grounds given the nature of the site and surrounding street network. Subject to compliance with those conditions, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to highways and parking, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 10 and CP9.

#### 4.7 Arboricultural Considerations

- 4.7.1 The site contains a number of mature trees that are protected by a TPO, as detailed above. Policy 9 states that development will be permitted where, following implementation of any required mitigation, there is no unacceptable impact on environmental assets or interests, including trees. Development is expected to incorporate existing trees into the design and layout of the scheme.
- 4.7.2 Where development is proposed which would result in the loss of protected trees, planning permission will only be granted where the desirability of the proposed development outweighs the amenity and/or nature conservation value of the trees. If the removal of one or more trees is permitted as part of a development, a condition will require that an equivalent number or more new trees are planted either on or near the site, unless a clear justification is provided for not doing so. Those requirements are underpinned by Policy DM17.
- 4.7.3 An Arboricultural Constraints Appraisal and Impact Assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The BwD Arboricultural Advisor has reviewed the submitted reports and the merits of the application as a whole. No objections have been raised. Two Sycamores would be removed to provide services to the development. Although not ideal, Policy 9 supports such works provided the desirability of delivering the development outweighs the value of the trees to be lost. Such a position is applicable to these proposals given the extensive public benefits provided.

4.7.4 The submitted landscaping scheme includes the provision of low-lying planting alone. The provision of additional trees within the site is not possible given the internal constraints. A condition is recommended regarding the submission of an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan, as requested by the BwD Arboricultural Advisor. Subject to compliance with that condition, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to arboricultural considerations, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 9 and DM17.

#### 4.8 Ecological Considerations

4.8.1 The site is a vacant building that has the potential to provide habitat for protected species. Policy 9 states that development will be permitted where, following implementation of any required mitigation, there is no unacceptable impact on environmental assets or interests, including habitats and species. Development likely to damage or destroy habitats or harm species of international or national importance will not be permitted. Those requirements are underpinned by Policy CP6.

4.8.2 A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment, Ecological Advice Note and Nesting Bird Check has been submitted in support of the application. The BwD Ecological Advisor has reviewed the submitted reports and the merits of the application as a whole. No objections have been raised and they are satisfied that the works can be undertaken without causing any undue harm to protected species.

4.8.3 The BwD Ecological Advisor has highlighted the need to obtain a license from Natural England before any works can proceed that could potentially cause harm to bats. It is recommended that a condition is added to control those details. The previously recommended condition requiring implementation of the submitted landscaping scheme would also provide adequate uplift in the way of biological net gains. Subject to compliance with those conditions, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to ecological considerations, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 9 and CP6.

#### 4.9 Drainage Considerations

4.9.1 The submitted application form states that surface waters would be drained via a main sewer. General requirements within Policy 9 require all development proposals to be serviced with adequate drainage systems. Those requirements are underpinned by Policy DM13. A Drainage Strategy has been submitted in support of the application. Both BwD Drainage and United Utilities have reviewed the submitted statement and the merits of the application as a whole. No objections have been raised.

4.9.2 The strategy involves disposing surface waters via a combined sewer, which is the least favoured option when considering the hierarchy detailed within national Planning Practice Guidance. That said, the constraints within the site prevent any other options being feasible, which has been acknowledged by

consultees. As proposed, the development is thus acceptable with reference to drainage, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 9 and DM13.

#### 4.10 Land Contamination

4.10.1 The proposed end-use involves visiting members of the public and land contamination must be assessed on that basis. Policy 8 contains further requirements to ensure development proposals on previously developed land can be remediated to a standard that provides a safe environment for users of the development whilst also ensuring contamination is not displaced. Those requirements are also underpinned by Policy DM2.

4.10.2 A Phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment and Phase 2 Geo-Environmental Investigation, Risk Assessment and Remediation Strategy has been submitted in support of the application. A review of the submitted documents has been undertaken by BwD Public Protection and they are satisfied that land contamination does not pose any significant risks.

4.10.3 The Phase 2 report contains a number of mitigation measures aimed at minimising any potential impacts associated with ground gas. A condition is recommended to ensure the development is implemented in accordance with those measures. Subject to compliance with that condition, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to land contamination, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 8 and DM2.

#### 4.11 Wider Sustainability Benefits

4.11.1 The proposals have been designed with the use of a number of sustainable and energy saving technologies. Policy 36 requires all development to demonstrate how it has been designed to minimise its contribution to carbon emissions and climate change. Those requirements are underpinned by Policies CP5 and DM12.

4.11.2 An Energy Strategy Report has been submitted in support of the application. The report identifies that approaches will be applied to reduce energy consumption through the use of a number of passive measures. Subject to the development being implemented in accordance with those details, which will be further controlled at the Building Regulations stage, the proposals would provide a number of wider sustainability benefits, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 36, CP5 and DM12.

#### 4.12 Crime Management

4.12.1 In order to prevent crime and disorder and to keep people safe and feeling safe, crime prevention strategies should be integrated into the design of developments as early as possible. Further requirements within Policy 8 state that all development proposals must incorporate positive measures aimed at reducing crime and improving community safety, including appropriately detailed design. Those requirements are also underpinned by Policy DM2.



4.12.2 In response to those requirements, the development should be designed and constructed using the security principles and security rated products detailed within the Commercial Developments Secured by Design Guide (2023), which is outlined in the submitted Crime Impact Statement. An Informative Note should be added to any approvals issued raising awareness to those requirements. Subject to those obligations being followed, the proposed development would be acceptable with reference to crime management, in accordance with the relevant requirements of Policies 8 and DM2.

#### 4.13 Summary

4.13.1 These applications seek Full Planning Permission (10/23/0777) and Listed Building Consent (10/23/0778) for the conversion and extension of the Grade II listed St John the Evangelist Church to provide office accommodation. Subject to appropriate conditions, the proposed developments would be acceptable on all the relevant planning grounds, in accordance with the policies and guidance notes detailed in Section 3.4.

4.13.2 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Subject to appropriate conditions, the proposals would be acceptable in principle and in terms of heritage assets, archaeology, design and visual amenity, residential amenity, highways and parking, arboricultural considerations, ecological considerations, drainage considerations, land contamination, wider sustainability benefits and crime management.

4.13.3 The developments therefore comply with the development plan. There is a positive presumption in favour of approving the developments and there are no material reasons to object to the applications.

### 5.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director of Growth & Development and Deputy Chief Executive to approve permission for the Full Planning Application (10/23/0777) and Listed Building Consent (10/23/0778) applications, subject to the following conditions and informative note;**

#### 5.1 Full Planning Application

5.1.1 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.

5.1.2 Unless explicitly required by condition within this consent, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the proposals as detailed on drawings: Location Plan (L0001), L0100, L0101, L0102, L0103, L0105, L0106, L0110, L0200, L0201, L0202, L0203, L0210,

L0211, L0212, L0213, L03002 D, L0301 D, L0302 D, L0303 D, L0304 C, L0400 B, L0401 B, L0402 B, L0403 B, L0500 B, L0501 B, L0502 B, L0503 B and SJC-WSP-A-XX-DR-L-10000-P01.

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

- 5.1.3 The materials and finishes to be used for the construction of the new roof of the development hereby approved shall be as stated on the submitted application form and approved drawings.

REASON: Those materials/finishes are acceptable for this development and site, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.4 Prior to their installation, details confirming the materials, styles and profiles of any new windows to be installed as part of the development hereby approved shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to control the types of windows to be installed, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.5 Prior to their installation, details confirming the materials, styles, profiles and technical specifications of any secondary glazing to be installed as part of the development hereby approved shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to control the type of secondary glazing to be installed, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.6 Prior to any such works taking place, a methodology for the cleaning and repair of any windows to be retained as part of the development hereby approved shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to control the extent of those works, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.7 No excavation or ground disturbance works on the application site, including any required for clearance/demolition, site preparation, tree removal, compounds, services, landscaping, etc. shall take place until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works, to include a formal watching brief to the standards and guidance set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists as an integral part of all investigation, excavation and other groundworks required for the development. This watching brief must be carried out by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional contractor and in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which shall first have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall include a contingency plan for the unexpected discovery of significant remains as well as the appropriate legal licences for the recovery of human remains. These works shall result in the compilation and deposition of a formal report on the works undertaken and the results obtained. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

REASON: In order to ensure and safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological/historical importance associated with the buildings and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.8 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use unless and until, the landscaping measures as shown on the approved plan 'SJC-WSP-A-XX-DR-L-10000-P01' have been implemented in their entirety, unless an alternate approach is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to ensure the development is adequately landscaped, in the interests of biodiversity and visual amenity, and to comply with the requirements of Policies 9 and 11 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015)

- 5.1.9 Any construction works associated with the development hereby approved shall only take place between the hours of 8:00 – 18:00 Monday – Friday and 9:00 – 13:00 on Saturdays. No such works shall take place on Sundays or Bank Holidays whatsoever.

REASON: In order to minimise noise disturbances for neighbours from construction works, in the interests of residential amenity, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 8 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.10 No development shall commence on site unless and until, a Construction Method Statement has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the

Local Planning Authority, which shall provide for but not be exclusively limited to the following;

- a) The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- b) The loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- c) The storage of plant and materials;
- d) The locations of any required scaffolding;
- e) The locations of operational cranes, where relevant;
- f) Measures to control the emissions of dust and dirt, where relevant;
- g) Measures to control noise and vibrations, where relevant;
- h) Details of wheel washing facilities, where relevant;
- i) A scheme for the recycling/disposing of waste;
- j) Details of any required security hoardings;
- k) Details of the type, position and height of any required external lighting, and;
- l) A compound plan showing the location/arrangement of the above provisions.

The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with all of the measures detailed within the approved Construction Method Statement.

REASON: In order to control the logistics of the construction phase, in the interests of residential amenity and highway safety, and to comply with the requirements of Policies 8 and 10 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.11 Prior to their installation, details confirming any required external cycle storage facilities to be installed in support of the development hereby approved shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to agree the scope of those provisions, in the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of travel, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 10 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.12 No development shall commence on site unless and until, an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan has first been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details and any tree protection fencing installed shall remain in situ until the external works hereby approved have been substantially completed.

REASON: In order to ensure adequate protections are afforded for any retained trees, in the interests of good arboricultural practice, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local

Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.13 No development shall commence on site unless and until, a licence issued by Natural England pursuant to Regulation 55 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendments) (EU Exit) 2019 authorising the specified activity/development to go ahead has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to ensure adequate measures are put in place for the protected of bats , in the interests of good ecological practice, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.1.14 The development hereby approved shall be implemented in strict accordance with the mitigation measures detailed within the submitted Phase 2 Geo-Environmental Investigation, Risk Assessment and Remediation Strategy (LKC 22 1292), prepared by the LK Group and dated November 2022.

REASON: In order to ensure adequate measures are put in place to safeguard against the risks associated with ground gas, in the interests of public safety, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 8 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

## 5.2 Listed Building Consent

- 5.2.1 The works hereby approved shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent. No later than three days after works first begin on site, written notice shall be given to the Local Planning Authority of the date on which works are first commenced.

REASON: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and to ensure the Local Planning Authority is informed of the commencement of the first works on the site.

- 5.2.2 Unless explicitly required by condition within this consent, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the proposals as detailed on drawings: Location Plan (L0001), L0100, L0101, L0102, L0103, L0105, L0106, L0110, L0200, L0201, L0202, L0203, L0210, L0211, L0212, L0213, L03002 D, L0301 D, L0302 D, L0303 D, L0304 C, L0400 B, L0401 B, L0402 B, L0403 B, L0500 B, L0501 B, L0502 B, L0503 B and SJC-WSP-A-XX-DR-L-10000-P01.

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

- 5.2.3 The materials and finishes to be used for the construction of the new roof of the development hereby approved shall be as stated on the submitted application form and approved drawings.

REASON: Those materials/finishes are acceptable for this development and site, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.2.4 Prior to their installation, details confirming the materials, styles and profiles of any new windows to be installed as part of the development hereby approved shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to control the types of windows to be installed, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.2.5 Prior to their installation, details confirming the materials, styles, profiles and technical specifications of any secondary glazing to be installed as part of the development hereby approved shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to control the type of secondary glazing to be installed, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.2.6 Prior to any such works taking place, a methodology for the cleaning and repair of any windows to be retained as part of the development hereby approved shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to control the extent of those works, in the interests of preserving the historical significance of the listed building, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.2.7 No excavation or ground disturbance works on the application site, including any required for clearance/demolition, site preparation, tree removal, compounds, services, landscaping, etc. shall take place until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a

programme of archaeological works, to include a formal watching brief to the standards and guidance set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists as an integral part of all investigation, excavation and other groundworks required for the development. This watching brief must be carried out by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional contractor and in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which shall first have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall include a contingency plan for the unexpected discovery of significant remains as well as the appropriate legal licences for the recovery of human remains. These works shall result in the compilation and deposition of a formal report on the works undertaken and the results obtained. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

REASON: In order to ensure and safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological/historical importance associated with the buildings and to comply with the requirements of Policy 39 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

- 5.2.8 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use unless and until, the landscaping measures as shown on the approved plan ‘SJC-WSP-A-XX-DR-L-10000-P01’ have been implemented in their entirety, unless an alternate approach is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to ensure the development is adequately landscaped, in the interests of biodiversity and visual amenity, and to comply with the requirements of Policies 9 and 11 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015)

- 5.2.9 No development shall commence on site unless and until, an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan has first been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details and any tree protection fencing installed shall remain in situ until the external works hereby approved have been substantially completed.

REASON: In order to ensure adequate protections are afforded for any retained trees, in the interests of good arboricultural practice, and to comply with the requirements of Policy 9 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015).

### 5.3 Case Specific Informative Note

- 5.3.1 We would strongly advocate that this development be designed and constructed to Secured by Design security standards, using the SBD ‘Commercial Developments 2023’ Design Guide specifications. Further details about Secured by Design, including application forms and security specifications can be found at [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com).

## **6.0 PLANNING HISTORY**

6.1 No relevant planning history.

## **7.0 CONSULTATIONS**

7.1 BwD Heritage Advisor – As I am required to do so, I have given the duty's imposed by s16(2), s.66(1) and s.72(1) of the P(LBCA) Act 1990 considerable weight in my comments. It will be down to the LPA to consider whether the benefits (public) of the case outweigh the identified less than substantial harm caused by the proposed works. P.199 on the NPPF requires great weight needs to be given to that harm. P.202 of the NPPF allows for the benefits to be weighed against the harm and the benefits include securing an optimum viable use for the building.

If the LPA is satisfied that a positive balance can be achieved then the proposal would meet the objectives of Chapter 16 of the NPPF and accord with the heritage policies of the Local Plan.

7.2 The Georgian Group – The Group overall welcomes the application to reuse this important historic building. We advise that we register no objection in principle to this application but offer some advice and comments.

St. John's Church is a fine example of a later-eighteenth-century urban church by an unknown architect, built c.1789 in classical style. The tower was added c.1802 and the church was again altered during the mid-late nineteenth-century. Prior to the 2019 fire, the church had been in use as a community centre. The 2019 fire resulted in the loss of most of the interior of the church including historic joinery and destroyed the roof structure. The primary significance of the church is therefore now in the aesthetic value of its classically composed exterior and in its communal value contributing strongly to character and setting of the surrounding Richmond Terrace Conservation Area.

(Pre-application engagement and remit) The Group's Casework Committee offered pre-application advice on this scheme. This advice is summarised in the applicant's planning statement section 5.0 and noted in Design and Access Statement Section 8.0. The Group thanks the applicant for their willingness to engage positively with us in pre-application discussions whilst developing this scheme.

We note that the scheme presented is much the same as the scheme on which The Group's Casework Committee last offered pre-application advice. Given this similarity, the comments offered below reiterate the advice offered by the Casework Committee.

The Group confines our comments to elements of the building within our statutory remit dates of 1700-1837. We do not offer comment on elements of the building outside of our statutory remit and defer to other expert amenity societies and consultees for comment thereon.



(Roof Extension) The Group advises that the proposed roof extension would be a conspicuous and prominent addition causing some harm to the aesthetic value and historic character of the building. It would also have some visual impact on the character and setting of the Richmond Terrace and Northgate Conservation Areas and on the setting of some nearby listed buildings.

The Group recognises that the applicant has offered significant revisions to reduce the impact of the roof extension during the design process and development of the proposals; notably lowering the height of the extension and altering the materials palette to be less assertive. We also further recognise the new revision within this application to omit a previously proposed link between the roof extension and the tower. We advise that this omission will help to provide some separation between the distinctive architectural styles of the modern roof extension and the historic building.

The Group acknowledges that the applicant has provided evidence within their supporting documentation demonstrating the necessity to include the roof extension to provide additional floor space needed to ensure that the proposed scheme of reuse is viable.

The Group advises that, in consideration of the harm which the proposed roof extension would cause and taking into account the justifications and mitigations submitted by the applicant, the LPA must be fully satisfied that the terms of NPPF (2021) paragraphs 200 and 202 are met and fulfilled viz. (200) *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.* (202) *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.*

(Windows) The Group recognises that where historic glazing survives it is proposed to be repaired and retained in line with the stained and leaded glass assessment. We however also note that it is proposed to install secondary glazing and external powder coated protective mesh and that several windows are proposed to be reinstated/replaced. We advise that no specifications or drawings are provided within the supporting documentation to specify the details of these interventions. We recommend that these further details should be submitted by the applicant for assessment by the LPA Conservation Officer. We advise that these documents should be submitted either prior to determination or secured by way of condition.

(Repair and Retention) The Group welcomes the applicants well considered and broadly conservation led approach to repairing and retaining historic fabric and fixtures and fittings throughout the building. The programme of repair and retention will be a considerable benefit helping to conserve the significance of the historic building.

(Conclusion) When making a decision on all listed building consent applications or any decision on a planning application for development that affects a listed building or its setting, a local planning authority must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Preservation in this context means not harming the special interest of the building, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged. This obligation, found in sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (1), applies to all decisions concerning listed buildings. Under section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 they also have a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

The Group advises that we overall welcome this application to return the former church of St. John the Evangelist to use and we register no objection in principle. We do however register some concerns about the impact of the proposed roof extension and regarding the lack of specifications regarding proposed window interventions.

We advise that if the LPA must carefully consider the balance of harm and benefits within the proposed scheme and we recommend that, if minded to grant consent, they must be satisfied that the terms and tests of The NPPF section 16 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 are fully met and fulfilled.

- 7.3 LCC Archaeology – The above applications are accompanied by an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA, J B Archaeology Ltd, 2022) and a Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment (HS, Crosby Granger Architects, 2023). Reference is made in those documents to an earlier Heritage Statement (Buttress Architects, 2019), a Geotechnical Study (LK Consult Ltd, 2022), a Ground-Penetrating Radar Survey (Malcolm Hughes Ltd, 2022), and a detailed topographic survey of the graveyard with a photographic record of each headstone (TriCAD Solutions, 2022), but copies do not appear to have been included on the application web site. We would be grateful if copies could be made available to us.

We would have no comment to make on the great majority of the proposed repairs and alterations to the standing structure of the building and are content to leave this to the expertise of the specialists and the Council's Conservation Advisors. We would note that the HS Section 5.0 item 5 states that "The lower stage is now missing it's clocks but holes remain for the mechanism" and section 5.0 item 51 refers to the retention, repair and refurbishment of the bell and bell frame. Particular advice on these items may be available from the appropriate specialists on the Blackburn Diocesan Advisory Committee.

With regard to works to the floors of the building we note the statement in the DBA Section 4.18 that "... Due to the relatively modern date of the church it is considered unlikely that there would be any inhumations within the body of the church. The inspection of the interior of the building did not reveal any ledger stones or surviving wall mounted monuments which could relate to internal

burials ...". It should be noted that whilst less common, it is not unknown for burials to have taken place within the body of an Anglican church during the period in which worship was occurring here. We are not reassured that such will not exist because of the lack of ledger stones, given the presence of woodblock flooring across the nave and alterations to the nave and chancel flooring which could hide such stones.

It should also be noted that there is a possibility that burials originally outside in the churchyard have been incorporated within the present building during the construction of the tower, the 'enlargements' of 1848, the addition of the vestry in 1865 (tho' the basement will have removed burials there), or the alterations to the chancel (HS, Section 2.4.4). The unanticipated presence of such 'formerly external' burials at a shallow depth within Victorian additions to a church became a major problem during re-flooring works at St Mary's Church in Penwortham, leading to delays for re-designs and archaeological excavation as well as added expense. The works at that church also identified previously unknown burial vaults within the body of the church.

It is possible that the geotechnical study, ground-penetrating radar survey or other works will have investigated the ground within the church for burials, but without a copy of the relevant reports (above) we cannot comment on their results and must recommend that the possibilities for burials within the walls be fully and appropriately investigated. It is recommended that such investigations are undertaken at the earliest opportunity and are accompanied by an appropriate archaeological scheme of monitoring and recording, as well as a Home Office Licence or other appropriate legal permission for the possible recovery of human remains.

With regard to works to the external spaces, there does not appear to be a plan of all the external works that will be undertaken, although outline plans for external illumination are provided and it is noted that the existing foul sewer connection is to be rebuilt on the existing line. We are reassured that the project team are aware of the presence of the graveyard here and that it is intended to retain the existing monuments and memorials both within and without the church. HS Section 5.0 item 14 states that "... all monuments, tombs, significant features and grave slabs [are] to remain in situ ..." and item 15 states that "... memorial slabs as ground surface can be relocated but must stay within the grounds of the Churchyard although the preference is for these to remain in-situ ...".

It should be noted that the practice of laying down grave slabs as paving was formerly widespread but is now seen as somewhat disrespectful and often leads to unnecessary damage to the stones. In addition, such slabs are often of a stone and a finish which are unsuitable for such use, becoming very slippery through wear and/or algae growth. We would agree with the comment made in the DBA that works in this area have the potential to disturb human remains. It is possible that these will be in-situ burials, but it is more probable that works will encounter disarticulated fragments. As such a formal archaeological watching brief will be necessary during any groundworks, with a contingency plan being in place to deal with the discovery of in-situ burials.

This should include proposals for the recovery, recording and reburial of any recovered human remains along with an appropriate Home Office licence or other legal permissions for such work as may be required. The works recommended above can be required by planning condition.

- 7.4 Historic Buildings and Places – In summary whilst we maintain concerns at the oversailing of the present roofline, we do not wish to lodge formal objections in that regard. Having now reviewed the plans, we did misunderstand the lift overrun. This is not in fact asymmetrically – placed and although it will conceal the eastern face of the bottom stage of the tower it will do so symmetrically and in materials that will not cause any confusion with historic fabric.

We can now well appreciate that this is the best last hope for the building and we welcome confirmation that the insurance settlement has been allocated to this project rather than diverted to other purposes. We are conscious too that the pre-app discussions with the Georgian Group have already led to concessions on the lowering of the cills to the lunettes and the withdrawal of the proposal for the link bridge across the chancel. We can therefore in good conscience withdraw any express or formal objection to the grant of listed building consent and planning permission.

- 7.5 Historic England – We provide advice when our engagement can add most value. In this case we are not offering advice. This should not be interpreted as comment on the merits of the application. We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers.

- 7.6 BwD Arboricultural Advisor – I have referred to the following documents – Stage 2 External Works (Landscaping soft and hard), Arboricultural Constraints Appraisal and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA)

The AIA refers to the removal of G2 consisting of two Sycamores. These are graded as moderate value trees. Due to the constraints of the site associated with burials on the site this is the only practical solution to allow access for new underground services.

T2 Lime extends close to the church and some minor pruning to clear the building would be advisable. Also T1 Lime is close to the front of the church and partially obscures the tower. Some pruning of T1 could enhance the views of the church. The Stage 2 External Works includes comprehensive, high quality, indicative proposals for hard and soft landscaping. This can enhance the setting without impeding on the existing trees.

It is understood that due to the constraints associated with gravestones, construction equipment such as cranes would be located outside the church site. However, there may be other development activities and associated equipment required within the church grounds, which may require consideration with regard to tree protection. Such issues can be dealt with by way of a condition for a method statement for tree protection.

(Conclusion) The proposals for new landscaping which can enhance the site without visually compromising the setting of the listed building. A condition for full landscape details would be appropriate. Also, an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP).

- 7.7 BwD Highways – In summary, we offer no objections, subject to the below matters being satisfactorily addressed.

(Parking) The property is located within/close to the town centre boundary. There are a number of public car parks that are sited in close proximity to offer supportive parking needs to the development. The schemes provides 14 cycle parking spaces (this should also include PTW parking). No details on where these are located is provided. These should be near the entrance covered and secure. Details of security and coverage is also required. Condition or provide clarification.

(Transport Statement) This has been reviewed, the movement associated with the proposal is not significant to raise any concerns. The report is deemed acceptable.

(Access & internal site Layout) There is no current vehicle access point into the site. The pedestrian access is to remain the same. No details on servicing needs/frequency has been provided, I suspect this to be low and can be managed by on street arrangements, please confirm.

(Other) Construction Method Statement is required to support the development, please condition.

- 7.8 BwD Public Protection – No objections. A Phase 1 Desk Top Study has been completed for the site by LK Consult. The site was recorded as a derelict church building. It was recommended an intrusive investigation was undertaken to confirm the extent of any contamination and characterise the gas and groundwater regime.

A Phase 2 Intrusive Investigation has been completed for the site by LK Consult. Two boreholes and six and pits were excavated along with some geotechnical investigations. No significant contamination was identified within the made ground. There was no visual / olfactory evidence of hydrocarbons or volatile contaminants in any locations. Based upon the encountered ground conditions no gas monitoring was considered necessary.

- 7.9 BwD Drainage – We have no objections to the proposals, as long as the developer gains consent from United Utilities to connect into their combined sewer.

- 7.10 United Utilities – We have no comments to make on the application.

- 7.11 BwD Ecological Advisor – The bat surveys provided to inform the application have recorded a small bat roost in the building to be converted. The roost was small, and of a relatively common bat species, so I would conclude that the

conversion works could proceed without causing harm to bats, providing that mitigation and compensation measures are implemented. A License will need to be obtained from Natural England before any works can proceed which could cause harm to bats, which should be secured by condition.

7.12 BwD Cleansing – No objections.

7.13 BwD Property Services – No objections.

7.14 Lancashire Constabulary – We would strongly advocate that this development be designed and constructed to Secured by Design security standards, using the SBD ‘Commercial Developments 2023’ Design Guide specifications.

7.15 Lancashire Fire and Rescue – It should be ensured that the scheme fully meets all the requirements of Building Regulations Approved Document B, Part B5 ‘Access and facilities for the Fire Service’. If Document B, Part B5 cannot be fully complied with then, in certain circumstances, the installation of a residential sprinkler system may be used as a compensatory feature, but professional advice should be sought in such cases.

7.16 No public responses received

**8.0 CONTACT OFFICER:** Christian Barton – Planning Officer

**9.0 DATE PREPARED:** 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## **10.0 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

10.1 None received.