

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 16 March 2021
DEPARTMENT: Planning Service
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING: Peter Baguley

APPLICATION REF: N/2020/1598

LOCATION: Alleyway adjacent to 87
St Michaels Road

DESCRIPTION: Installation of gate at St Michael's Road end of the alleyway and
fixed panel at Dunster Street end.

WARD: Castle Ward

APPLICANT: Northampton Borough Council
AGENT: Northampton Borough Council

REFERRED BY: Director of Planning and Sustainability
REASON: NBC owns the land and is the Applicant

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 **APPROVAL** subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The proposed development would not have a significant adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the amenity of local residents and businesses. Whilst there would be some harm to the historic environment, this would be less than substantial and would be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. As a consequence, the proposal is in conformity with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies BN5 and S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policy E26 of the Northampton Local Plan.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The planning application proposes the installation of gates at either end of an alleyway which leads from Dunster Street to St Michaels Road and is adjacent to 87 St Michaels Road.
- 2.2 The installation of the gates is proposed in order to restrict access and address persistent anti-social behaviour issues in and around the alleyway following concerns raised by local residents.
- 2.3 The opening located at the Dunster Street end of the alleyway is proposed to be an infill panel comprising vertical black metal bars with horizontal support which would have no pedestrian access and would be fitted flush with the highway.

- 2.4 The opening located at the St Michaels Road end of the alleyway would be of similar appearance but with an inward opening 1.2m wide gate for pedestrian access with side infill panel. The installation would be flush with the highway with a letterbox attached to the inside of the gate for use by 87 St Michaels Road. The gate would be fitted with a thumb turn lock allowing egress to St Michaels Road with no. 87 being supplied with keys as their front entrance is located within the alleyway.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The application site comprises of an alleyway, located adjacent to 87 St Michaels Road which runs between St Michaels Road and Dunster Street.
- 3.2 The site is located on the boundary of the Central Area as defined by the Central Area Action Plan and lies within the Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area. The surrounding area is mixed residential and commercial uses with the nearest listed building approximately 50m to the west.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 There is no relevant planning history

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Statutory Duty

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014) and the Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following sections are of particular relevance to this application:

Paragraph 17 sets out core planning principles that include seeking to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers

Paragraph 56 seeks to ensure good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and should contribute to making places better for people.

Paragraph 193 states that great weight should be given to heritage assets conservation.

Chapter 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – advises on the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider social benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can bring and the positive contribution that conservation of the heritage asset can make to sustainable communities.

5.3 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

Policy S10: Sustainable Development Principles
Policy BN5: The Historic Environment and Landscape

5.4 **Northampton Local Plan (1997)**

Saved Policy E26: New development to preserve or enhance character and appearance of Conservation Areas

5.5 **Other Material Considerations**

Boot and Shoe Area Quarter Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

6. **CONSULTATIONS/REPRESENTATIONS**

Comments received are summarised as follows:

- 6.1 **NBC Conservation** – The gating of the alley will prevent general use; however, the open design of the gates will enable visibility along the route so its former use and association with the boot and shoe industry and the contribution it makes to the historic street pattern can be appreciated. The proposal will result in a level of harm to significance which is considered less than substantial.
- 6.2 **Northamptonshire Police** – Northants Police has no objection to the application to gate the alleyway stating that the Community Safety Team have worked closely with Northants Police and Fire colleagues and the application represents the outcome of that co-operative working.
- 6.3 **Town Centre Conservation Area Advisory Committee** – the committee noted that the alleyway gives character to the Conservation Area and is significant for illustrating the historical movement patterns from home to factory in the Boot and Shoe Quarter. However, members accept that anti-social behaviour could have a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area and therefore do not object to the gating of the alleyway but recommend a more decorative gating be incorporated, appropriate to the traditional character and the age of the buildings of the Conservation Area.
- 6.4 **NCC Highways** – No objections to the proposal.
- 6.5 Support for the proposal received from a local business stating that the alleyway has been a problem for many years and closing it off will enhance the condition of the area.

7 **APPRAISAL**

Principle and Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Issues

- 7.1 The principle of installing the gates to restrict public access to the alleyway linking Dunster Street and St Michael's Road by a Public Spaces Protection Order was agreed by Cabinet on 20th January 2021 following a public consultation that was carried out in 2020 where 83% of the general public agreed that it was a good idea on the grounds of public safety.
- 7.2 The closure requires the installation of one gate and one single infill panel, fixed at either end of the alley. The gate will provide pedestrian access to the front entrance of 87 St Michaels Road and egress for residents with rear gates leading onto the alley.

- 7.3 The principle of removing the general access through the alleyway is considered acceptable as there are alternative routes to link Dunster Street to St Michaels Road while allowing a more secure environment to serve the local residents.

Impact on Heritage Assets and Design

- 7.4 The alley is a historic pedestrian route, dating to before 1900, which linked the boot and shoe factories with the surrounding residential properties, and thus is of some significance. The alley is one of a number within the Conservation Area which assist in understanding the rapid and comprehensive development of the area as a result of the boot and shoe industry with houses and industrial buildings in close proximity.
- 7.5 Whilst views along the alleyway would be somewhat restricted due to the installation, the open design of the proposal will ensure visibility along the route ensuring its association with the boot and shoe industry and contribution to the historic street pattern can still be appreciated.

Amenity

- 7.6 The main entrance of no. 87 St Michaels Road is located within the Alleyway. A house number sign, secure post box and portable wireless doorbell would be provided attached to the gateway leading onto St Michaels Road. Only no. 87 St Michaels Road will be provided with keys to the gate as they will require daily access in and out of the alleyway. As such, it is considered that the harm to the occupiers of no. 87 has been mitigated and would therefore, not be significant.
- 7.7 All residents with rear entrances into the alleyway will have egress to St Michaels Road via the gate using a thumb turn lock but do not require keys for access.
- 7.8 It is considered that the amenity of local residents and nearby businesses will be improved by preventing general access to the alleyway, with any impact outweighed by the benefits of the proposal.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposed works would result in harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area however, the harm is considered to be less than substantial and is outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal in seeking to address anti-social behaviour issues in the area. Therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable and the proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions below.

9. CONDITIONS

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

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Proposed Alleyway Gating, DS/001 and DS/002

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

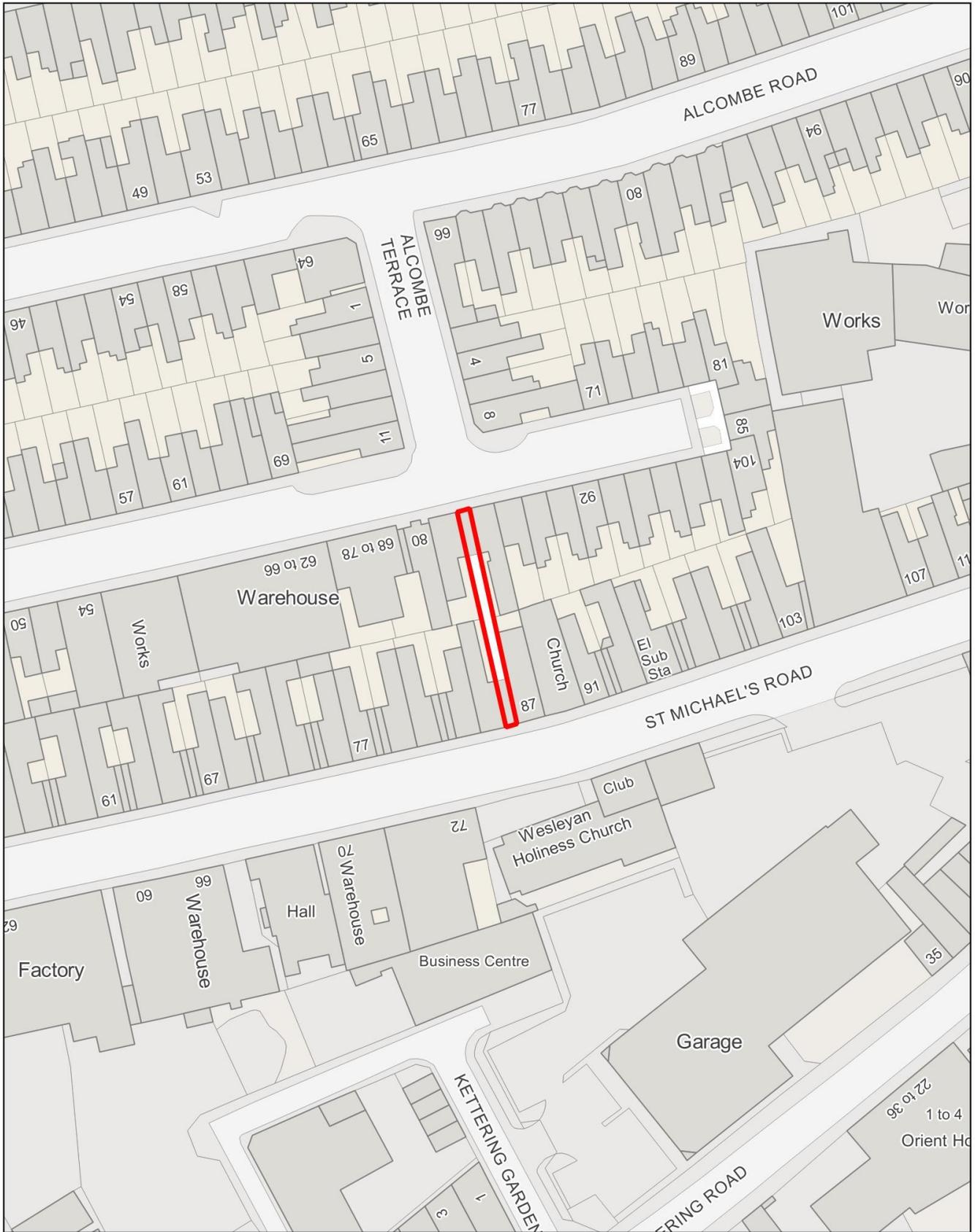
- 10.1 N/2020/1598

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Title: **Alleyway adj 87 St Michaels Road**

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Date: 05-03-2021

Scale: 1:800

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