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Planning Development Rights of Way

Planning Supporting Statement, including Heritage Impact Assessment for redevelopment at Britannia Mills, Britannia Road, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield

Introduction to proposals

This statement accompanies a Full Application for conservation area consent and planning permission for the partial demolition and re-development / change of use of the site for a mix of B1c (light industry), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) business units at Britannia Mills, Britannia Road, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield.

The site is currently occupied by a run-down stone and brick built mill building, which is largely disused and vacant (see photos in Appendix A).

The site is located in the centre of Slaithwaite, south of the River Colne and north of the A62 (Manchester Road). Access to the site is via Britannia Road. Other business and industry surrounds the site to the east, north and west (the latter being within the same ownership as the applicant). Some residential properties lie across the road to the south on Kiln Hill.

The proposed redevelopment of the site includes the following:

- Part demolition of the existing mill buildings.
- Erection of new smaller units (853 q.m) and re-use of others (260 sq.m) for B1c, B2 and B8 uses
- Formation of new car parking area comprising 22 spaces, and service yards

The application is accompanied by the following plans and reports:

- 1) Existing and proposed site layouts
- 2) Existing and proposed elevations (and sections)
- 3) Demolition Plan
- 4) Ecological Appraisal
- 5) Transport Statement
- 6) Planning Supporting Statement (including Heritage Impact Assessment)
- 7) Design & Access Statement

Principle of development

The former north-light buildings in question are redundant and disused. They are in a very poor state of repair as a result of significant periods of disuse, with some areas exposed to the elements.

The redevelopment of the site would enable it to be brought back into viable use, creating employment in a highly sustainable location, whilst at the same time improving the overall visual amenity of the site, and hence the character and appearance of the Slaithwaite Conservation Area.

Government planning policy also strongly supports sustainable economic growth and states ¹ that “significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”

The NPPF’s core planning principles ² also seek to “proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.”

Previously developed land

The proposals seek to bring back a vacant previously developed site back into beneficial use, in accordance with NPPF paragraph’s 17 ³ & 111 ⁴.

The proposals will therefore regenerate a brownfield site and create new employment for the local area.

Heritage Impact

The site is located in the Slaithwaite Conservation Area and the chimney which is located directly adjacent to the site is a Grade II Listed Asset. Policy BE5 in the Kirklees Unitary Development Plan requires that any proposals should preserve or enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area in which they lie. Paragraphs 131-134 of the National Planning Policy Framework require the Local Planning Authority to assess the proposal in terms of its effect on designated heritage assets.

The buildings in question are fairly standard north light structures, with a mix of brick and stone used in the construction of their walls. They are not considered to be out of the ordinary and in their present state produce a neutral to negative impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (and setting of the chimney).

The only feature of note is an infilled stone arch with date stone, situated on the northern elevation adjacent to the existing yard (see below). However, the current owners believe this arch and date stone are not in their original position and therefore their heritage value is questionable.

¹ NPPF Paragraph 19

² Paragraph 17 (iii)

³ Bullet point vii (contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value); and viii (encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value).

⁴ Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land).



Infilled archway and date stone

The proposals would not impact upon the three-bay multi-storey building immediately to the east of the listed chimney, nor affect the three storey building fronting the main street (with shops below).

The proposals aim to re-use some of the smaller structures on the site, while also following the pattern of the existing buildings to be demolished by re-using the first metre of their existing walls. Standard industrial type metal cladding is proposed to be used for the walls and roofs of the new buildings as well as those where re-use is proposed.

The area of buildings affected is effectively land-locked or enclosed by other buildings / adjacent sites. In particular, the site is barely visible from any of the main streets within the village centre. As such, it is not considered that the parts of the site proposed to be redeveloped contribute particularly positively to the wider Conservation Area. This factor, combined with the lack of any significant historic or architectural interest, leads to the conclusion that the proposals would lead to 'less than substantial' harm to the setting of the listed chimney, or the wider Conservation Area.

The applicant's submission is that the proposed development would at the very least leave the character of the Conservation Area unharmed, and would arguably enhance it by the development of derelict land and re-use of a vacant and obsolete part of the mill site.

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 134, the public benefits of bringing this site back into a viable beneficial use are numerous and detailed elsewhere in this statement (e.g. bringing a vacant site back into economic use, creating jobs and prosperity; the sustainable location of the site in the heart of Slaithwaite, providing easy access and spin-off benefits to other businesses in the village; increasing off-street parking etc.).

Ecology / bats

An ecological appraisal (including a bat survey) accompanies the application.⁵ The report concludes that:

- The site supports habitats of low ecological value.
- The current buildings are considered to be of negligible suitability for roosting bats, and as such no further surveys are required.

Given the findings of the appraisal, it is considered that the proposals would conserve the natural and ecological environment in accordance with paragraph 118 of the NPPF.

Highway safety and accessibility

There are numerous constraints with the current site including: a single narrow vehicular access from the main street (no access for HGV's); lack of turning area for anything more than vans; no vehicular access many parts of the site; and very little in the way of off-street parking.

The proposals cannot solve all these constraints, however a number of improvements are proposed:

- 22 additional off-street parking spaces
- Better internal circulation for smaller vehicles / vans through selective demolition, enabling more areas of the site to be accessed.
- The proposals seek to redevelop the site for smaller units, thereby reducing or eliminating the need for larger service vehicles to use the site, thereby improving highway safety.

It is also important to highlight that turning areas are proposed within the site allowing for cars and vans using the site to exit in a forward gear. Visibility splays in both directions along Britannia Road are considered to be acceptable.

As such, it is our view that the proposals comply with paragraph 32 of the NPPF and policies T10⁶ and T18⁷ of the UDP.

Paragraphs 17⁸ and 30 call on the planning system to actively manage patterns of growth to: minimise the need to travel; make the fullest possible use of sustainable modes of transport; and to focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

⁵ Brooks Ecological September 2017

⁶ Policy T10 – Highway Safety

⁷ Policy T18 – Parking Standards

⁸ Bullet point xi

The Transport Assessment concludes that there are practical and convenient transport links available to and from the proposed development (including regular buses and trains), offering the potential for visitors and employees to walk, cycle or use modes of public transport.

Conclusion

The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development and twelve core land-use planning principles. In accordance with the key national planning objectives, the proposals represent sustainable development in that they will achieve the following economic, social and environmental objectives (and contribute to many of the core planning principles set of in NPPF paragraph 17):

- Bring a long-term derelict brownfield site back into beneficial use.
- Locating new economic development in a sustainable location, close to a range of public transport facilities and town centre facilities.
- Make a neutral / positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Slaithwaite Conservation Area, and the environmental quality of a former derelict industrial site.
- Improve highway safety with better vehicular circulation and additional off-street parking.
- Enhance the vitality and viability of Slaithwaite town centre by bringing new businesses within walking distance of its shops, services and leisure facilities.

Finally, NPPF Paragraph 118 states that “...decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible” and that they “should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.”

As demonstrated above, it is considered that the proposals represent sustainable development in Slaithwaite that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted accordingly.

Robert Halstead Chartered Surveyors & Town Planners

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Appendix A

