



Historic England

Mr David Wordsworth
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Planning, Investment & Regeneration Service
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Huddersfield
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Direct Dial: 07917 828419

Our ref: L00962486
P00962493

14 September 2020

Dear Mr Wordsworth

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Application Direction 2015
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**FORMER KIRKLEES COLLEGE, NEW NORTH ROAD, HUDDERSFIELD, HD1 5NN
Application Nos. 2018/92687 & 2018/92647**

Thank you for your letter of 24 August 2020 regarding further information on the above applications for listed building consent and planning permission. On the basis of this information we wish to provide the following comments.

Summary

The former Huddersfield Royal Infirmary site occupies a prominent position on the edge of Huddersfield town centre, affecting the setting of a number of listed buildings and three conservation areas. The regeneration of this strategic site represents a critical opportunity in the development of Huddersfield town centre, which would bring back into use a nationally important building alongside some of its ancillary structures which contribute to its significance and to the story of the development of the town.

As such, the principle of redeveloping this site is supported. Whilst we welcome some changes to the previous scheme, the loss of historic buildings – block G in particular - and the increased density of the proposed development on the north part of the site would be harmful to the character and appearance of conservation area and the setting of surrounding listed buildings, and consequently we have concerns on heritage grounds. Whilst we do not object to the proposal, we ask that your authority is satisfied that this is the minimum amount of development necessary to make the proposal viable and that can only be delivered in this particular way.

When making this judgement, we ask you to consider the ‘special regard’ which must be paid to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings and preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 127, 130, 192-196 and 200 of the NPPF.



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Historic England Advice

Significance of the affected Heritage Assets

The former Huddersfield Royal Infirmary site occupies a prominent position on the edge of Huddersfield town centre, within the setting of a large number of listed buildings and affecting three conservation areas. The original infirmary (F1) is listed grade II* and, together with the grade II listed statue of Edward VII, provides an impressive centrepiece for a complex of structures which help to tell the story of the development of healthcare and the civic character of Huddersfield. Some of these buildings are of considerable architectural merit and make a positive contribution to the character of the Greenhead Park Conservation Area.

Impact of the proposals on the Historic Environment

The amended design has introduced positive changes to the proposal. We welcome the retention of the Infirmary wings (buildings F2 and F3), the removal of the residential tower formerly proposed to the north east of the College Campus area and improvements to the landscape to the front of the Grade II* listed Infirmary building and around the grade II listed statue of King Edward VII. These amendments have reduced the physical impact of the proposal on the significance of the Infirmary and the setting of these listed assets. However, there remain areas which cause concern.

Loss of Block G. This extension illustrates an important period of development of the building following its designation as Royal Infirmary in 1911. It was designed in the 1920s-1932 by the Nottingham-based firm of architects Calvert and Jessop alongside the local firm of Joseph Berry and Sons – Joseph Berry would serve as Mayor of Huddersfield in 1923-24. The building shows some merit on its massing, architectural detailing and articulation with the main Infirmary building and its immediate context. In particular, its elevation to Portland Street makes a strong contribution to the streetscape of this part of the conservation area; the siting of its east pavilion alongside the Infirmary's main elevation, incorporating the former 1890s Bath Building, adds interest to the setting of the Grade II* listed building. As such, its loss would be regrettable.

Replacement buildings to the north of the site. The amendments made to the scheme show an increased density on this part of the site. This raises strong concern, as we think it would not be possible to accommodate the proposed numbers without considerable impact to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area. The outline status of this element of the application, with only 'indicative' elevations provided, creates a degree of uncertainty over the likely nature of the eventual proposals and prevents their full impact from being assessed.



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Although the layout of the proposed buildings (nos. 4 and 5) seeks precedent on the historic grain, the footprint, massing, scale and detailing of the proposed development are not sympathetic to this historic context. The concern is that the number of units and the proposed block arrangement is likely to result in a significant mass and scale, which will be overly dominant in this context; this would have a detrimental impact on to the setting of the grade II* Infirmary, the grade II listed church and surrounding listed buildings and the character of the area. While providing a means of reducing surface parking, the incorporation of a undercroft parking, with its consequent inactive frontage at street level, is likely to compound the negative effects on the immediate context.

College Campus site. We acknowledge there is an extant permission for the retail development currently proposed on the College Campus part of the site and the benefits the approved arrangements would have on enhancing the prominence of the listed building through opening views to it from the south. However, it is unfortunate that a stronger urban form could not have been achieved to better connect the former infirmary complex with the town centre and relieve some of the current pressure on the northern part of the site.

Policy Considerations

The development principles outlined in the local plan site allocation for this site state that: “Development proposals will be required to retain and reuse the Grade II* former Infirmary buildings. Any new buildings or structures should conserve those elements which contribute to the significance of the Listed Buildings on this site and the character of the Conservation Area. The inclusion of this site in the recently approved Huddersfield Blueprint Supplementary Planning Document (May 2020) illustrates its relevance on the wider regeneration of the town

National planning statute imposes legal duties to preserve listed buildings and preserve or enhance conservation areas (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, sections 16, 66 and 72). The government’s policy on development affecting the historic environment is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. It clearly states the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation (paragraph 192). It also states that the significance of heritage assets should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal (paragraph 190). Policies requiring the creation of well-designed places also highlight the importance of developments being sympathetic to local character and history (paragraph 127) and taking the opportunity to improve the character and quality of an area (paragraph 130).



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Historic England position on the application

We acknowledge the challenges of converting this site to a new use and welcome the many positive changes that have been made. We recognise the need for the proposal to be viable and therefore understand that the loss of some of these historic buildings may be necessary in order to achieve the repair and conversion of the grade II* listed Infirmary and rear wings and improvements to the forecourt. However, the degree of loss and the density of the proposed development to the north of the site, with its impact on to the conservation area and setting of listed buildings, are a concern.

We believe that there would be harm to the grade II* listed Infirmary building and there is likely to be harm to the Greenhead Park Conservation Area. Although overall we consider that the level of harm caused will be less than substantial in NPPF terms, any harm requires appropriate justification and consequently, we ask that your authority is satisfied that the loss of historic buildings and proposed density are necessary to make the development viable and that this can only be delivered on this particular way.

When making this judgement, we ask you to consider the 'special regard' which must be paid to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings as well as the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 127, 130, 192-196 and 200 of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice.

Yours sincerely

Rosa Teira Paz

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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