

Consultation Response from KC Conservation and Design
2018/92687 former Kirklees College, New North Road, Huddersfield, HD1 5NN
Listed Building Consent for alterations, demolition of part the grade ii* listed building and other curtilage listed buildings (within a Conservation Area)
Date Responded: 9.10.20 Responding Officer: Sue Oakley Responding Ref:

The Kirklees College site is a large site in a high-profile location directly to the west of the Huddersfield ring road. In the centre of the site is the Grade II* listed former infirmary building dating to 1831 with later wings to the rear. Attached to the north and west of the infirmary are later extensions which are also included in the listing and date from the 19th century through to the mid-20th century. These show the evolution of the site and include a bath house, nurses' accommodation and a large Art Deco style building which faces Portland Street. At the northern end of the site is a small college building constructed in the 1980's. Situated on land to the front of the 1831 infirmary building is a Grade II listed life size bronze statue of King Edward VII on top of a tall granite plinth.

The northern part of the site is within the Greenhead Park/ New North Road Conservation Area. To the east of the site is the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area and to the south is the corner of the Springwood Conservation Area. A group of 1970's college buildings at the southern end of the site are outside these conservation areas but are attached to the infirmary building and are therefore included in the listing.

The former college site is included in the Huddersfield Blueprint SPD document as an area of opportunity, with the document stating that the site offers opportunities for the conversion of the historic buildings along with uses across the site that could offer mixed use development. The overall objective of the Blueprint is to create a place that celebrates its heritage, with high quality design and the re-use and refurbishment of the existing building stock within Huddersfield.

The Local Plan allocation for this site requires development proposals to retain and reuse the Grade II* infirmary buildings, with any new buildings or other structures conserving the elements which contribute to the significance of the listed buildings and the character of the conservation area.

Policy LP17 requires new development to preserve and enhance the towns' cultural and architectural heritage and open spaces and connections to them.

LP24 requires the form, scale, layout and details of all development to respect and enhance the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape, with the re-use of existing buildings wherever practicable.

LP35 requires proposals to retain those elements of the historic environment which contribute to the distinct identity of the Kirklees area and secure a sustainable future for heritage assets at risk. Development proposals which affect a designated heritage asset should preserve or enhance its significance, and where harm is likely to be caused, public benefits must be demonstrated to outweigh this harm.

The NPPF Chapter 16 stipulates that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 195 requires substantial public benefits to be demonstrated where there is substantial harm, and 196 requires

public benefits to be demonstrated to outweigh less than substantial harm, including, where appropriate, securing the optimum viable use for the heritage asset.

Following previous comments and negotiations the application has been revised, with the applicant now proposing to retain and convert the II* listed infirmary building (building F1) along with the two rear wings to the west (buildings F2 and F3) into high quality residential and office accommodation. Given the dilapidated state of the site and the length of time that the listed building has been vacant I support a sensitive proposal which restores the significant heritage assets on the site and gives them a sustainable and viable use, and I welcome this proposal to retain the rear wings.

More detail on the restoration and conversion of these buildings will follow later.

At the southern end of the proposal site, to the south of the Greenhead Park/ New North Road Conservation Area, are blocks A to E, a group of large flat roofed college buildings dating to the 1970's and in a high-profile location adjacent to the Huddersfield ring road on the corner of Castlegate and Trinity Street. These structures harm the setting of the listed former infirmary building and limit its view from the ring road and also harm the setting of the surrounding conservation areas, and therefore I welcome their demolition and the opportunity to enhance this space.

Although the proposed supermarket building and landscaping is a great improvement on the existing, I have some concerns about the design of the building in this context. I support the use of natural stone, with the elevation broken up with stone piers to add some interest, but I feel that the prominent east facing elevation facing the ring road, and the elevation facing the Grade II* listed building which includes the delivery entrance, are rather plain and lacking in interest. I would like to see the landscaping and architectural detailing on these elevations to enhance and respect the setting of the listed building and statue. Although construction of this building was approved in 2016 (2015/93827), the design has been amended slightly and I hope the applicants will consider these comments and provide some enhancements to these aspects of the site. The same conditions attached to the previous permission should be applied.

Retaining walls with indicative heights of between 2m and 4m are proposed at the southern end of the site, wrapping around the east and south elevations of the supermarket. The masterplan drawing option 12 – suggests that grading may be an alternative option and I would support this to soften the landscape, with natural stone walling which follows the style of the retained boundary walls in front of the infirmary building. This will create some continuity along the boundary.

The demolition of Buildings G to K to the north of the 1831 building is proposed, with the construction of Buildings 4 and 5. Attached to the original building, G to K are included in the listing and I would consider their demolition to cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building and character of the conservation area. I accept the demolition of buildings H, J and K, although I have concerns about the loss of Building G which is architecturally interesting.

Building G dates to the 1930's and the heritage assessment states that it has moderate to low architectural significance, with group value together with buildings F2, F3, H1 and H2. It states that the Portland Street elevation of this building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and its loss will lead to less than substantial harm to the conservation area. I consider the Art Deco elevation facing Portland Street to have architectural interest in its own right, contributing to the character of the street scene in this part of the conservation area as well as providing a reference to the evolution of the infirmary. Looking along Portland Street the two pavilions are imposing structures, and this elevation has interesting detailing such as the decorative hoppers, multi-paned windows and fluted carved detailing on the parapets and around the doorways. I feel that the exterior of this building contributes positively to the site and I would prefer the elevations facing Portland Street to be retained and incorporated into a proposal.

This proposal includes an outline application for the construction of Buildings 4 and 5, with reserved matters covering the detailed design. The existing buildings at the northern end of the site are up to three storeys in height plus basement and roof levels and are set back from the New North Road site boundary on the east elevation. The proposed buildings are four storeys high plus roof level accommodation and are situated directly onto the site boundaries on Fitzwilliam Street and New North Road, and close to the boundary of Portland Street.

On the opposite side of New North Road to the east is a group of Grade II listed buildings facing the college site including 30, 32, 34, 40 and 42 New North Road, two storey dwellings dating to the mid-19th century, St Patricks Church dating to the early 19th century and a listed low stone boundary wall with gate piers, built alongside the footway. These structures are constructed from ashlar sandstone, with the façade of the church being particularly ornate and the adjacent presbytery at number 34 having interesting detailing on the facade.

I am concerned about the design, scale and positioning of building 5 and its dominance over the two-storey listed infirmary building on the site as well as the listed church and properties on New North Road, which would sit directly opposite this new structure. Historic maps from the late 19th and early 20th centuries indicate that there were terraced houses close to the boundary of the site at the northern end and the design and access statement has used this urban grain to inform the proposed footprint.

The heritage assessment states that the proposed height of buildings 4 and 5 reflects that of the existing buildings on the northern part of the site, also reflecting the historic development that occurred prior to the construction of Building G (the terraced houses). However, the existing multi-storey buildings are set back from the north and east boundaries and I would consider building 5 to have significantly more impact on the infirmary and surrounding listed buildings than the existing structures due to its location directly on the site boundary.

The Local Plan allocation stipulates that proposals will identify an appropriate layout, scale, appearance and materials of the proposed residential development to conserve those elements which contribute to the significance of the heritage assets on this site, taking into account the updated Heritage Impact Assessment submitted.

Given the fairly standard design of Buildings 4 and 5 and their dominance over the surrounding listed buildings, I would like to see amendments to their design, with more consideration given to the immediate context and with the retention of elements of Building G. I consider that in their current form these elevations harm the setting of the listed buildings, in particular the infirmary and St Patrick's Church, and while I understand that the site is in need of improvement, they should be redesigned to complement their setting.

To the north of the site are three Grade II listed former dwellings, 112 to 116 Fitzwilliam Street, along with the listed boundary wall of number 112. I consider the impact of Building 5 on the setting of these listed buildings to be less, although the scale and design should also be considered carefully in this prominent location.

Landscaping

Although there is still an element of car parking to the front of the infirmary building, the proposed soft landscaping around the statue enhances this listed structure and the façade of the infirmary building and creates a focal point on the site. I have no concerns about this element of the proposal, subject to materials being approved, with the use of natural stone setts and flags, and continuity of street furniture and surfaces.

I welcome further discussions on this proposal to address the comments above. As stated above, further comments will be provided on the restoration of the listed buildings.