

## Planning Conservation & Design Consultation

**Consultation on Application Number:** 2018/92842

**Address:** Former Combs Hostel, Hall Lane, Thornhill, Dewsbury, WF12 0PL

**Proposal:** Reserved matters application for erection of 30 dwellings pursuant to outline permission 2014/92815 for demolition of existing hostel buildings (C1) and erection of residential development

**DC Officer:** Matthew Woodward

**Conservation & Design Officer:** Craig McHugh

**Date of consultation response:** 16/10/2018

### Summary

**Thornhill Conservation Area is of particular historic interest for its group of medieval and Jacobean historic sites and buildings, indeed some are amongst the most significant examples of their type in Kirklees. Development is proposed on a site that contributes to the significance of Thornhill Conservation Area, Thornhill Hall moated site and Thornhill Hall and its associated farmstead. As proposed the development would cause some harm to the significance of designated heritage assets. Conservation and Design have concerns about the proposed development on heritage and design grounds. Revised proposals should be sought that better reveal the significance of the conservation area and take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.**

### Significance of the heritage assets affected

Thornhill Conservation Area is of particular historic interest for its group of medieval and Jacobean historic sites and buildings, indeed some are amongst the most significant examples of their type in Kirklees. Thornhill Hall moated site (a scheduled monument of national importance) was the principal seat of the Savile family from the fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries. The grade I listed Church of St Michael and All Angels dates from at least the 15<sup>th</sup> century and includes the fine Savile Chapel. There are many grade II listed buildings that originate from the 17<sup>th</sup> century including the Old Rectory, Combs Hall and the new Thornhill Hall. In the late nineteenth century Combs Colliery was opened to the north of the conservation area, stimulating the construction of terraced and back-to-back cottages for its workforce including Hall Lane Cottages and Prospect Terrace, which are in the conservation area.

Thornhill has grown organically over many centuries, its street layout and the differing ways in which properties relate to the streets reflects this. Earlier properties are in more generous plots (the Old Rectory, Thornhill (new) Hall), set back from the road and sometimes at right angles to it (as at Combs Hall). Later properties are often in short rows built close to the street or set at right angles to it. East of Church Lane and The Combs, Thornhill has a rural character, with low density development. With the exception of the churchyard, the village to the west of Church Lane and The Combs is of a denser grain and is more urban in character.

The proposed development site was agricultural land, probably associated with Thornhill Hall, until it was partly developed in the late twentieth century as a school. The site contributes to the significance of Thornhill Conservation Area, Thornhill Hall moated site and Thornhill Hall and its associated farmstead. The existing buildings make detract from their setting by virtue of their condition and massing. The areas of open land, trees and hedges contribute positively and reinforce the rural nature of Hall Lane.

## **Impact of the proposals on significance**

The proposed development is for 30 detached dwellings on the site of the former Combs Hostel on the north side of Hall Lane. The layout of the proposed development is quite dense and overly regular, with slightly smaller plots book-ending a broadly symmetrical block plan. The weakest aspect of the proposal is plots 21-30 which back on to Hall Lane, this is not characteristic of the older areas of Thornhill. Details of the materials to be used for the elevations of the houses is not clear, areas with brickwork texture are clearly labelled as brick, but plain areas are unlabelled. It should be clarified if these are also to be brick or rendered. Existing trees and hedgerows are to be retained and some further trees and hedges are to be planted, which is welcomed. As proposed the development would cause some harm to the significance of designated heritage assets.

## **Relevant Policies/Guidance**

We should avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal (NPPF 2018 para. 190). We should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveals its significance) should be treated favourably (para. 200). Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions (para. 130).

The proposed development would respond better to the historic character of Thornhill if more variety in the layout of the streets and plots and the density of the development was introduced. This could be achieved by a greater density of development, perhaps rows of townhouses at the west end of the site and decreasing density through the site towards the east, with houses set in more spacious grounds at the eastern end. The layout should be revised so that no properties back onto Hall Lane.

In determining the application we should take account of the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (para 192(c)). Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (para. 196). The development would cause some harm to the significance of designated heritage assets. The condition of the Combs Hall Hostel and the anti-social behaviour associated with it could be addressed by serving a Section 215 Notice under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to clear the site and address the amenity issues, so undue weight should not be given to the public benefits of redevelopment.

Thornhill Rectory Park will be a particular amenity for the residents of the new development. There are currently two informal entrances to the park from Hall Lane. The park would benefit from an improved entrance and heritage interpretation at this point, the boundary wall may also require repair. A contribution from the developer could be sought to deliver this improvement.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Conservation and Design have concerns about the proposed development on heritage and design grounds.

Revised proposals should be sought that better reveal the significance of the conservation area and take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

A developer contribution towards improving entrance to the park should be considered.