

**Consultation Response from KC,
 Conservation and Design**
2020/94203 Clough House, 236, Leeds Road, Birstall, Batley, WF17 0HW
Outline application for demolition of dwelling and associated outbuildings and the erection of 30 dwellings
Date Responded: 08.1.2021
Responding Officer: NG
Responding Ref:
1. Summary.

The current proposal is objected to in terms of both the harm which would result from the loss of the non-designated heritage assets and the poorly considered, insular housing layout dominated by vehicular movement and hardstanding. Consequently, the proposals are contrary to local and national Planning and heritage and should not be granted consent in this form. The application should be advised to retain and integrate the identified, significant heritage assets within an alternative residential development.

2. Context.

The site comprises the substantial villa of Clough House which stands in partially cleared grounds accessed from Leeds Road. The house is believed to have been constructed in 1799 for the Gott family and is known to have been standing in the extant form before 1840.

The property is currently not listed and does not form part of a conservation area. However, the building group is clearly of some architectural and historic interest. Consequently, an application was made to Historic England, (prior to submission of the current development proposal), to add the building group to the statutory list. The case for statutory listing would be dependent on the architectural and historic significance of the site, largely measured by the degree of survival of authentic, significant fabric and the architectural expression of the original building group. The Secretary of State's conclusions are currently awaited.

The current application is supported by an inadequate 'Heritage Assessment', which provides no real research or objective analysis of the heritage significance of the site components and simply seeks to justify the clearance of the site on the basis of the provision of new housing. The Heritage Assessment does not meet the information requirements of NPPF 189.

Prior to submission of the application, the site's significance as a late-C18th villa had been diminished by means of the removal of architectural and garden landscape features (the latter of which are clearly recorded on the 1893 OS). Works had been on-going on the site for some time to alter the landscape setting and strip the interior of the building. Nevertheless, the surviving building group retains sufficient authenticity and architectural integrity to continue to be read as a collection of heritage assets which are evidently of local significance and retain the potential for integration within a more considered development of the site.

3. Site origins.

Clough House was owned and lived in by John Gott Esq (1764-1840) and his family, a gentleman landowner who owned much of Howden Clough. The Gott family are recorded in local birth, marriage and death registers as living in Howden Clough in the mid-C18. Historic England suggest that the current form of the house may have replaced an earlier building or is an adaption of an earlier building that was re-fronted and re-fashioned to be more 'polite' (i.e. modernised to the then prevailing late-Georgian style).

Following John Gott's death in 1840 the house and estate passed to his daughter Sarah, and subsequently to his granddaughter Eliza, who lived in Sheffield and tenanted the house. The general layout of the Clough House site thus remained intact, focused on the main house, the barn, the kitchen garden wall and the clearly defined landscaped gardens extending south to Leeds Road.

The 1854 published OS map depicts two ranges of outbuildings to the rear (north) of the house

connected to each other with a short narrow link and arranged in an L-shape, but by 1894 the western range and link had been demolished, leaving a detached barn.

The rear (north) part of the site (former kitchen gardens) was redeveloped to become a piggery in the early post-WWII period, with the detached barn then converted for office use. The majority of the buildings associated with the piggery use were removed by the 1990s.

The house was altered internally in the late-C20th and again in the early-C21st to be adapted to a new business use. The garden landscape, including the mature trees lining the frontage and the sweeping drive and ornamental planting within the south frontage remained, until very recently when a series of site clearance removed the mature tree groups and landscape features.

4. The surviving site components and architectural details.

The surviving Clough House components are located centrally, positioned off-centre towards the west boundary, north of Leeds Road. The house was originally surrounded by agricultural land, but the site had begun to be encroached by residential development to the east and west by the mid-C19th, with terraced properties spreading along Leeds Road. At the turn of the C19th and C20th the north boundary of Clough House was enclosed by the embankment of the former railway L&NWR branch railway line. The site is now enclosed by C20th residential development on the east and east flanks, with a late-C20th industrial estate (accessed from Pennine View) to the north.

The surviving, **historic components** of interest comprise the late-C18th villa known as **Clough House**, a **stone barn** and a dividing **garden wall** all of which are contained within the now tightly-enclosed boundaries of the large rectangular site. The changes to the landscape mean that the house is approached by an access off Leeds Road via an oval-shaped driveway set around a central lawn (reflecting the early C19th landscape plan) towards the principal front elevation (which faces south into the landscaped garden). The original entrance gate piers on Leeds Road have been removed and replaced by modern versions with curved wing walls. The detached, contemporary stone barn to the rear of the house (north-side) faces south and includes mid-C20 extensions its north side of no historic significance.

Clough House remains the **external architectural focus** of the site and is of two storeys plus attic and basement. The house retains typical late-Georgian features, including quoins to the corners (that to the front corners is raised) and a pitched roof with end stacks with plain cornices. The south frontage contrasting with that on the north elevation, seemingly confirming Historic England's suggestion that the house was remodelled during the mid-C19th.

The three-bay front elevation faces south and is completely of ashlar, focused on a central doorway with a classical doorcase incorporating a scrolled pediment and a partly-glazed panelled door. The south facing windows have been largely removed their original form is expressed by a single surviving original window with plate-glass sashes, probably dating from the Mid-C19th. The front door is flanked by full-height canted bays, which have had their windows and glazing recently removed.

In typical Georgian style, the main roof is hidden from views from the south by a parapet with blind panelling set above an eaves cornice; behind the parapet are two small dormer windows.

The house's west gable end is blank apart from a tall keyed, round-headed window at attic level, which has been partially blocked up with a small square glazed window inserted at its base. The east gable end has an identical attic window to that on the west elevation, but on this side the keystone at the head of the window is also inscribed with the date '1799'.

To the centre of the ground floor is what appears to have been a doorway into the garden (a small now-removed porch is depicted on historic OS maps), but which has since been converted into a window and its access steps removed. The doorway/window has lost its glazing and has been boarded over.

The rear elevation (north) of Clough House has a tall keyed, round-arched stair window to the

centre, which is divided into two halves by a transom and has multipaned glazing, typical of the late-C18th and again adding evidence of the re-fronting of the house. The two flanking outer bays are lit by three-light mullioned windows to each floor and those to the ground floor are slightly taller. The mullions to the ground-floor left window have been replaced and one of the mullions to the first-floor right window has been removed.

Projecting from the east side of the rear (north) elevation is the small altered outbuilding. The outbuilding has been altered and extends into the north wall of the conservatory and encloses part of the garden wall which divides the site. The altered outbuilding now has a shared outshut roof with the conservatory with modern skylights and kneelers believed to have possibly been reused from the original roof. The outbuilding's south-west wall has been re-positioned and incorporates a possible 'beebole' opening (place for keeping honey bees notably in the C18th).

The **interior architectural features** of **Clough House** have been altered over time and recently subject to extensive stripping of details, in advance of the submission of the current planning application. However, the original plan-form and some historic features survive. The house has a central entrance hall with a staircase set to the rear and two rooms off to each side on both floors, and a dressing room to the centre front on the first floor.

Much of the interior fabric including: the panelled doors, floorboards, skirting boards, and the majority of window and door architraves have been removed, while the lath and plaster ceilings have also been damaged. Historic England recorded that much of the original decorative interior plaster has been removed but that the house continues to retain some distinctive late-Georgian features including: a panelled dado, moulded cornicing, and an arch in front of the stair, with a principal ground-floor room retaining a moulded cornicing, a decorative frieze, and classical ceiling decoration and decorative (non-original) white-marble fire surround.

The painted-stone dog-leg stair also retains typical late-Georgian characteristics and continues the dado of the entrance hall, It has a curtail step and wreathed mahogany handrail, and alternate stick and wavy iron balusters, with a short section of balustrading in front of the tall stair window on the half-landing. The stair is cantilevered on the upper flight and leads up to a wide first-floor landing with plain moulded cornicing. To the rear a modest first-floor room contains a cast-iron hob grate and a later timber stair accessing the attic – with the lower half of an earlier, narrower attic winder stair surviving underneath. The stairs lead to the attic which has an exposed roof structure of queen-post roof trusses, side purlins and rafters with a mixture of early and modern timbers.

At ground-floor level a stone stair flight underneath the main stair leads down to a service basement underneath the north-west corner of the building, which consists of two barrel-vaulted rooms with stone-flag floors, brick and stone preparation slabs, stone shelving, and ceiling hooks.

The detached two-storey **stone barn** to the rear of the house is largely hidden from views from Leeds Road by the main house (and previously the landscaped gardens). It also retains typical late-Georgian characteristics including a hipped roof and substantial quoining to the corners complementing the form of the main house. The south elevation of the stone barn has a large segmental-arched cart opening to the centre with a quoined surround and prominent keystone. Above is a keyed lunette window.

The outer bays on the ground-floor include three inserted C20th windows with ashlar surrounds, one adapted from an original blocked-up doorway. The first floor are large original pitching-eyes/oculi with squared-off bottoms and sills that would have originally served a hayloft. The west elevation has two keyed, round-arched windows to the ground floor (that to the centre appears to be original, but that to the left is a mid-C20 insertion) and a pitching-eye/oculus to the first floor in the same style as those to the front. The east elevation has two wide, mid-C20 inserted windows to the ground floor and an original pitching eye/oculus to the first floor.

The north elevation is largely concealed at ground-floor level by two, single-storey, mid-C20 red and buff-brick extensions of no significance.

The barn's interior has been altered, initially to accommodate mid-20th office use and subsequently modernised for the same use. The internal alterations include the insertion of modern partition walls and the replacement of floor timbers on the first floor. The barn's roof structure consists of both modern and earlier timbers, and includes king-post trusses, and modern timbers surviving from now-removed (modern) ceiling.

The dividing **garden wall** runs broadly west to east from the rear of the house in a concave arc, and defines the division of the historic garden landscape. It extends eastwards from the altered outbuilding adjacent to the house for approximately 47 metres. Beyond the house the wall is constructed of mellow-red brick on the southern face and coursed millstone grit on the north face with low buttresses and topped by ashlar copings. The wall appears to have been designed to enclose the domestic, landscaped gardens to the south and screen the kitchen gardens (later the piggery) and original outbuildings to the north of the house.

The wall retains domestic garden details and varies in height as it crosses the site, approximately 2 – 3 metres in height and divides the grounds into two distinctive sections. Its highest point is at the western end, adjoining the house, where it also incorporates a doorway with an ashlar surround that originally led into a tiny outbuilding on the north side of the wall depicted on historic OS maps. Located roughly at the wall's centre-point is a small mellow-red brick bothy/garden shelter (also depicted on historic OS maps). The bothy's open entrance is a rebuilt arch of millstone grit and it has a sandstone-flag floor. A short section of the wall (approximately 2 metres) immediately to the east of the bothy has been rebuilt with later engineered brick and re-used stone.

5. Heritage significance of the site components.

The house dates from at least 1799 and was built for the Gott family who were notable local landowners during the C18th and C19th. The C18th date is significant because, in accordance with the Government's statutory listing criteria, buildings of this period, "*which retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest, (i.e. listable) although some selection is necessary*". An application is understood to have been on this basis to Historic England to add the building group (house, barn and kitchen garden wall) to the statutory list. The case for statutory listing would be largely dependent on the degree of survival of authentic, significant fabric and the architectural expression of the original building group. Consequently, the heritage status of the building should be considered to be an important consideration in the evaluation of the current planning proposal and consent should not be granted for any development before the Secretary of State's decision is known.

However, irrespective of the case for statutory listing, it is clear that the site (despite recent stripping of features and landscape components) retains a building group which is evidently of local heritage interest and, therefore, should be treated as a '**non-designated heritage asset**' and integrated into the development of the site.

The status of the villa and barn as non-designated heritage assets is recognised in the submitted, inadequate and inaccurate 'Heritage Assessment'. This supporting statement provides no real evidence or objective analysis of the heritage significance of the site's character or components and simply seeks to justify the clearance on the basis of the provision of new housing. The Heritage Assessment does not meet the information requirements of NPPF 189.

It is clear that, prior to submission of the application, the site's significance as a late-Georgian villa has been diminished by means of the removal both internal features and the landscape features which form its setting (the latter of which are clearly recorded on the 1893 OS).

Nevertheless, the surviving building group retains sufficient authenticity and architectural integrity to continue to be read as heritage assets which are of some significance and merit retention and integration within the site's development. The connections to the Gott family and the local area also add to the local historic interest of the site.

6. The proposed development.

The current outline proposals present a form of development which results in the complete loss of the surviving historic features and presents a residential layout which is characterised by extensive areas of hard-standing surfaces and is focused on the accommodation of vehicle movement and parking. The proposed residential units are tightly packed with minimum amenity space, no green space or streetscape planting and no space for the accommodation of biodiversity. The proposal thus presents a **high level of harm** to significant local heritage assets and a **poor residential design** which demonstrably fails to improve the character and urban quality of its context.

The proposal would remove all currently extant boundary features and landscaping and limits pedestrian links across the site. It is worthy of note that the current proposals have been preceded by a series of site works which have removed the mature landscape and boundary features (including the mature boundary trees) as well as many of the internal architectural features of the historic buildings. The result would be an insular, visually sterile and anonymous, collection of cud-de-sacs, with negligible greenspace and inadequate linkages to local amenities or greenspace and no accommodation for wildlife space. The proposals consequently fail to respond to the opportunities to respond positively to their context and contribute little to the creation of a distinctive townscape or the wider character and quality of the locality.

The outlines plan indicates an area of 'open space' at the north end of the site which suggests a connection with the site. However, this area is outside of the redlined area and is designated as industrial land (with a lapsed consent for warehousing) and would remain inaccessible.

The proposed development, therefore, fails to consider the character and historic components of the existing site and its context. The surviving late-Georgian buildings on site comprise a collection of **non-designated heritage assets** and are sited in a manner which means that they evidently could be integrated into a more carefully considered residential development which responds to local character. The current proposal's adverse heritage and townscape impacts would not be outweighed by any demonstrable public benefits.

7. Conclusion/Recommendation.

The current proposal erases the local heritage interest of the site, resulting in the loss of non-designated heritage assets, and presents a poorly considered residential layout dominated by vehicular movement and hardstanding. Thus, the proposals fail to meet the requirements of the Kirklees Local Plan Policies: **LP24** (Design), **LP35(2)** (Historic Environment) and the guidance presented in the emerging Residential Design SPD. The proposals are also contrary to the requirements of NPPF paragraphs **127**, **130** (Design) and NPPF paragraphs **189**, **192** and **197** (Historic Environment), as well as the guidance set out in the National Design Guide.

Therefore, it is recommended that the proposed development is not supported or granted in this form. The applicants should be advised to fundamentally reconsider their development options for the site, focusing on retaining and integrating the identified, significant heritage assets within an alternative residential development.