

<b>Consultation Response from KC, Conservation and Design</b>		
<b>2020/91919 The Co Operative Food, 19, Northgate, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8RX</b>		
<b>Demolition of existing supermarket and erection of block of 6 flats with associated parking (within a Conservation Area)</b>		
<b>Date Responded: 21.8.20</b>	<b>Responding Officer: Sue Oakley</b>	<b>Responding Ref:</b>
<p>The Co-Op food store at 19 Northgate in Almondbury is a modern single storey flat roofed building located within the Almondbury Conservation Area. Opposite this building is a row of terraced houses, one of which is Grade II listed (14 Northgate), and nearby to the south is the Grade II listed 43-51 Northgate, part of the former Rose and Crown public house. The site is located on the main thoroughfare through Almondbury and within the historic core of the settlement. This street is characterised by terraced residential properties and retail premises, and many of these buildings either face directly onto Northgate or have small front yards and gardens acting as a buffer. Historically, there was a short terrace on the proposal site which faced directly onto the road, typical of many buildings within the immediate vicinity. The predominant building material within this part of the conservation area is natural stone, with some later render applied to some nearby secondary elevations.</p> <p>The applicant proposes to demolish the existing building and construct a two-storey block of six flats on the site, set back from the road with nine parking spaces and a large area of tarmac to the front. The proposed building is constructed in stone facing and render with stone surrounds and banding. The roofing material and configuration, window colours and detailing are not clear on the application.</p> <p>The existing building makes a negative contribution to the character of the conservation area and I welcome its demolition and replacement with a high-quality development, and I believe housing to be a suitable use in this location which was historically residential in character.</p> <p>I consider the scale of the building to be acceptable as most buildings within the area are two storeys in height. However, I am concerned about the design, in particular the front elevation which faces Northgate. I support the use of natural stone with some detailing, although the finish and type of stone needs to be clarified and more information on the detailing should be provided, including window surrounds, gutter corbels, the use of ashlar, split or hammer dressed stone. The extensive use of render is not characteristic of the area and should be omitted on principle elevations and reduced or omitted on less prominent elevations.</p> <p>Clarification of the roof details should be provided as it appears from the drawings that truncated gables and flat roofs are proposed.</p> <p>On the façade I would prefer to see a more linear elevation with repetitive elements, more reminiscent of the historic terraces in the immediate vicinity, and the windows should be in a more consistent design. If balconies are considered acceptable, I would prefer simple iron railings rather than glazed panels, as this would complement the local character.</p> <p>The design and access statement considers the building to be in keeping with the local area, providing an enhancement, but it does not elaborate on this or give justification for the extensive use of render, the position on the building and the site layout. The character of the surrounding area does not appear to have been explored and considered sufficiently in this proposal.</p> <p>LP35 states that 'proposals shall maintain local distinctiveness' and LP24 states that 'the form, scale, layout and details of all development shall respect and enhance the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape'.</p>		

The heritage statement notes that the proposal will not cause substantial harm to the heritage assets and I would agree with this. However, it also states that the proposed scheme will have no impact on the conservation area or nearby listed buildings and will fit seamlessly within the conservation area. Although it is an improvement on the existing, I consider the design and layout to cause less than substantial harm to the character of the conservation area by the use of render, the design of the visible elevations, possibly the roofline (subject to clarification), and the expanse of tarmac on the front boundary which does not create an attractive street scene.

This is a good opportunity to enhance a prominent site within the conservation area and there are clearly public benefits in providing housing and improving this site, and I support a residential scheme in principle. However, I would prefer the design of the building to be amended to reflect the local character and the layout of the site to be re-designed to reflect the surrounding street scene and character, perhaps with the building brought forward on the site.