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Our ref: L01423490
P01423570

26 April 2021

Dear Mr Walker

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

**BROOKES MILL, ARMITAGE ROAD, ARMITAGE BRIDGE, HUDDERSFIELD, HD4
7NR**

Application Nos 2021/90585 & 2021/90584

Thank you for your letters of 16 April 2021 regarding the above applications for listed building consent and planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the applications.

Summary

Brookes Mill, at the heart of Armitage Bridge Conservation Area, represents one of the best examples of an integrated woollen type mill within the Huddersfield area.

Building 29 - the former loom shop - is one of the earliest buildings within the site and contributes to the narrative of the development of the mill on its transition from hand power to mechanisation. Its form and scale make a positive contribution to the setting of the grade II listed tower, giving context and a sense of enclosure and being a prominent building in views from the recently created courtyard.

The current proposals seek the conversion of this building for its use as a wellbeing centre and consider the removal of the three upper storeys. Whilst we welcome the principle of conversion to the proposed uses, we cannot support the loss of the upper floors of the building. The partial demolition of the building will be harmful to the significance of this important historic complex, to the setting of the surrounding heritage assets and to the character of the conservation area.



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We acknowledge the challenges of finding new viable uses to this extensive complex to ensure its long-term sustainability. However, the partial demolition of one of the core buildings of the complex cannot be supported.

The redevelopment and economic viability of the site needs to be considered more holistically. We provided pre-application advice on wider proposals for the site back in 2018 and we would be keen to re-engage in discussions with the applicant alongside your authority to help find a viable future for this important asset.

Historic England objects to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of paragraphs 192, 193, 194 and 200.

Historic England Advice

Significance of the mill complex

Brookes Mill lies at the heart of Armitage Bridge Conservation Area, is its most important asset, has shaped the development of the village and is the reason it has been designated as a conservation area. The complex represents one of the best examples of an integrated woollen type mill within the Huddersfield area. The site developed from 1816 onwards, when it became the base for wool cloth manufacturing for a family business founded in 1541.

The first buildings of the woollen mill complex included a warehouse (Buildings 18 and 19 - numbers as they appear in the Heritage Statement), a building for hand spinning and hand loom weaving (Buildings 20, 21a) and a water-powered scribbling and fulling mill (Building 51). By 1850 a new mill (Building 52) was introduced for powered spinning alongside a new loom shop (Building 29) and an extensive weaving shed (now demolished). A Clock Tower was added to this central core after 1850s. Subsequent development infilled spaces between buildings and around the boundaries of the site, adding to the existing buildings, including finishing buildings, dyehouses, cottages, largely one to two-storeys high.

The recent demolition of the weaving shed has created a large courtyard at the core of the site dominated by the Clock Tower. Together, the surrounding buildings form a group and give context and scale to the tower, creating a remarkable image of the mill nestled on the edge of the woodland with the tower presiding over this large open space, which is an important landmark to the conservation area.

The Clock Tower and former warehouse building are listed at grade II; the remaining buildings being curtilage listed. The form and scale of the buildings are important to our understanding of the narrative and evolution of the site and contribute importantly



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to the character of the conservation area.

Textile production in the mill site ceased in 1987. Selective building refurbishment and clearance of the less historically significant buildings has been undertaken since in order to allow the implementation of new uses.

Impact of the proposals

The current proposals seek the demolition of the three upper storeys of Building 29 - the former loom shop - and the conversion of the remaining floors for its use as a wellbeing centre.

The structural report submitted with this application describes the poor condition of the floors and the substantial reinforcement of the timber structure required for the building to be capable of re-use. The lack of horizontal restraint has led to problems of structural instability on the upper levels, which are exacerbated by the building's length and height. The case presented is that the costs of restoring and strengthening the upper three storeys do not add any significant return required for commercial viability.

The partial demolition of the building will substantially alter one of the earliest buildings within the site, diminishing its prominence. This in turn would affect the historic significance of the whole complex.

The reduction in height of the building would also have a detrimental impact on the setting of the grade II listed tower. We note that the recently created courtyard has the potential to become a new arrival space - appearing as a future car park and piazza courtyard in the submitted plans - and therefore the prominence of this view becomes even more critical. The proposed reduction in height would detract from this powerful image conveyed by the tower framed by the tall buildings on either end.

Planning Policy Considerations

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas.

Paragraph 192 of the NPPF asks local authorities to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset to be



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considered, with great weight given to the conservation of the asset, and paragraph 194 goes on to say that any harm requires clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 200 asks local authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Historic England Position

The principle of converting part of Building 29 for its use as a wellbeing centre is supported. However, given the significance of this building in relation to the mill complex and its contribution to the setting of the surrounding listed buildings, we consider the harm resulting from the partial demolition of the building is not justified. Alternative options which look at partial strengthening and mothballing of the upper floors could reduce overall costs - particularly when considering costs of demolition - and represent a more pragmatic alternative, for example.

We acknowledge the challenges of finding new viable uses to this extensive complex and admit that considerable change may need to be accepted to ensure the long sustainability of the site. However, as one of the earliest buildings and a prominent building within the mill complex, the scale and form of Building 29 should be retained.

The redevelopment and economic viability of the site needs to be considered more holistically. We provided pre-application advice on wider proposals for the site back in 2018 and we would be keen to re-engage on discussions with the applicant alongside your authority to help find a viable future for this important asset.

Historic England has commissioned extensive research into mills, on the potential for vacant and under-used mills in the regions to act as a stimulus for regeneration activity and to contribute to growth in the local economy. *Engines of Prosperity, new uses for old mills (West Yorkshire)* was published in 2016 and assessed a combination of recently refurbished and currently disused mills across West Yorkshire, which the applicant and your authority may find of interest to the current application. More information on our Mills Strategy Work and the report can be found on the following link: <https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/protect/mills-of-the-north/research-and-guidance/>



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Recommendation

Historic England objects to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of paragraphs 192, 193, 194 and 200.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(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.

You should also bear in mind section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 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. If, however, you propose to determine the application in its current form, please treat this as a letter of objection, inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Rosa Teira Paz

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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cc: Sue Oakley, Kirklees MBC



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