

**Consultation Response from KC,  
Conservation and Design**

**2021/90800 Hinchliffe Mill, Water Street, Holmbridge, Holmfirth, HD9 2NX**

**Redevelopment and change of use of former mill site to form seven residential units within the mill building and erection of 17 dwellings (within a Conservation Area)**

**Date Responded: 30.03.21    Responding Officer: NG    Responding Ref: CA21**

**The site significance and heritage impact context.**

The Hinchliffe Mill complex is the central feature of the conservation area which was designated on 01.08.1980. There is no current Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA), although a survey of the designated area was undertaken at the time of its designation which identified the extant mill as the focus of the Conservation area and noted its *“attractive proportions and notable setting across the mill pond”*.

The designated Conservation Area covers the mill building, its mill pond, the cleared ancillary site, as well as its Holme riverside setting. The 1834 enclosure map indicates the location of the current mill and mill pond, although the form of the current mill is understood to date from 1852, following partial re-construction, as recorded in the Archaeological Building Record dated 2011 which supports the application. The architectural form of the village (and the conservation area) was complete by 1854, although some change and infilling has taken place since that date.

The designated area is compact and defined by the views across the valley of the terraces of former workers’ and weavers’ cottages and the former/surviving industrial complex prominently located either side of the river. The character of the valley bottom is dominated by the un-listed mill complex which both flanks and channels the river and forms an important, character-defining composition with a sharp contrast between the industrial heritage and open countryside which defines the setting of the surrounding listed cottages and bridge. The mill is recorded as being in a *“sound overall state”* in the submitted structural report and suitable for conversion.

The mill building and its components are consequently evidently positive contributors to the character and appearance of the Hinchliffe Mill Conservation Area and thus key components of the designated heritage asset. The development should thus be considered in the context of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset. Furthermore, NPPF paragraphs 189, 193 and 194 require that the impact on the significance of the mill building and its setting as well as the wider conservation area, are both clearly understood and that “great weight” is to be given to the designated heritage assets’ conservation and considered. The requirements of Local Plan Policy 35 (1) echo these statutory requirements and require that the development should demonstrably preserve or enhance the significance of the designated heritage asset.

The site is covered by a Local Plan allocation HS190 which details the extent of built and natural heritage constraints which frame the development of this allocated site. The current proposal does not meet the statutory, national or Local Plan requirements and presents some significant adverse heritage impacts which are outlined below.

**The heritage impact of the development proposal.**

Planning consent was granted in 2010 (2010/91518) for re-development of the mill and its context,

which then presented an opportunity to rejuvenate this part of the designated conservation area. The previously consented scheme sub-divided the extant, main mill building into 7 town house units with 12 additional units. This is understood to reflect the local plan allocation of 19 Units.

Implementation of the 2010 consented scheme would have resulted in the transformation of the mill building, compromising its internal spatial arrangements and its character as a former industrial building. However, the principle of the sub-division of the mill building is accepted as having been established as a means to utilise the former mill building. The consented scheme also resulted in the now implemented demolition of all the supporting ancillary buildings, on the basis that overall the redevelopment would retain the architectural focus on the former mill and complement its setting with a substantial but broadly sensitively defined new development. The development was not implemented and has now lapsed.

The principle of the subdivision and redevelopment of the mill building for residential development has thus been established, retaining the mill pond and the setting of the complex.

However, the current proposal considerably increases the quantum of the development within the setting of the former mill, both in terms of the scale and mass of the proposed residential units and the sprawl across the site. The resultant impact of the considerably increased development footprint (as well as the scale and mass of the proposed residential units) would both diminish the architectural focus on the historic mill, as well as compromising the setting of both the redundant complex and the character of the terraced properties which enclose the river and mill pond. The scale and form of development proposed by the current proposals are considered to present an excessive and adverse direct and indirect heritage impact on the surviving mill building and its setting. This would not preserve or enhance the special interest of these positive components which define the character of the designated heritage asset. The cumulative impact of the current proposals are consequently considered to a negative and adverse heritage impact which would result in a high degree of harm to the key components of the designated heritage asset (the conservation area) as a whole.

The current application introduces significant changes from the 2010 consented scheme which would result in a greater compromise of all aspects of the former mill complex. The changes to the previously consented scheme include a greater degree of alteration to the surviving mill building. These include an increased number of openings (and loss of original fabric) to accommodate internal garaging, as well as a comprehensive change to the fenestration pattern and elevational changes which further erode the already compromised character of the former industrial building, diminishing its significance and special interest. The interior of the mill remains comprehensively sub-divided in the proposed scheme. The cumulative impact would be a further erosion of the character of the architectural interest of the mill building.

With regard to the new build, the proposed new residential units are wider spread across the site and present a collection of jarring architectural forms which would fail to complement the mill complex. The former industrial character of the site would thus be subsumed by the scale, mass and quantum of the residential units and their associated servicing requirements. The proposed residential units 23 and 24 encroach on the mill pond, comprising its enclosure and the semi-natural form of the embankment, while providing inadequate space for these residential units which back into a steep and narrow embankment. Units 1 to 3 are substantial suburban style detached properties which architecturally make few concessions to the character of their context and be read as a negative imposition on the key views of the mill complex across the mill pond. The accommodation of units 18-22 on the raised level to the south of the mill, pushes the development's extent up the hill site where these three-storey

properties would be read as an unduly dominant intrusion into both the setting of the mill and the adjacent countryside. The views across the valley would be dominated by these highly assertive suburban-style villas. The proposed terraced units 11-16 make a token attempt to suggest a bold, north-light roof form of an industrial complex, although this does not reflect the simple architectural form of the demolished ancillary units and is not convincing as an architectural expression of the site's origins.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposed new development makes no informed or appropriate architectural references to its context and provides a layout which sprawls across the site and would visually subsume the much-altered surviving mill building within a contemporary suburban housing estate. The previously consented development scheme also had a substantial impact on the mill complex but was rather more convincing in its attempt to integrate the new build units within the composition of industrial context and visually deferred to the mill.

The current proposal exacerbates the compromises of the previous scheme, which were partially mitigated by being contained within a more compact development layout. The proposed sprawl across the site would erode the understanding and appreciation of the former industrial site as a positive contributor to the conservation area. It would obscure the site's origins as a compact historic industrial complex and its evolution, including its role as an important greenspace within the conservation area.

Therefore, the current proposal neither preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area and presents a major adverse heritage impact which would compromise the special interest of the designated heritage assets, contrary to the statutory requirement of s.72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The development would result in a high degree of harm to the character and appearance of the site, transforming the surviving mill building and its setting. It would result in less than substantial harm to the character of the designated conservation area which could not be balanced by any demonstrable public benefits, failing to meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 196 and Local Plan Policy 135. Indeed, the public benefits which had partially balanced the impact of the previously consented scheme, would be negated by the increased quantum, sprawl and physical impact of the currently proposed development.

The proposed development fails to address the opportunity to enhance the conservation area by bringing back into use the former mill building and would impose an unacceptable and negative impact on the heritage assets as a result of its insensitive scale, mass, architectural form and sprawl across the site. The desired re-use of the surviving components of the mill complex, including the pond and riverside setting, should not be compromised by the detrimental impact of the current proposals.

Consequently, the demonstrable harm to the character of the conservation area presented by this proposals as well as the positive contributors to the designated area mean that the proposals is not supported and is recommended for refusal in this form. The applicants should be advised to reconsider the scale and form of the development, to considerably temper its impact, in line with the framework indicated in the Local Plan allocation. The fundamental design objective should be to retain the focus on the mill and avoid the compromise to its setting.