

# THE ARCHITECTS' BUREAU

Report in support of proposed student residential conversion of

Roadside Building at Excelsior Works,  
St John's Road, Huddersfield



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# 1 Introduction

This report has been prepared in support of a planning application for 5no one bedroom student townhouses with associated circulation and support spaces on the site of Excelsior Works, St John's Road, Huddersfield.

Excelsior Works is a legacy of the industrial past which has helped to define Huddersfield. It is a stone built, Victorian pitched valley roofed mill with associated ancillary buildings which occupy a prominent position close to the town centre on St John's Road, an arterial route from Birkby.

A number of applications have been submitted for the site (including the conversion of the main building into student accommodation 2018/90108 and six number two bed student townhouse scheme 2019/ 90707), and renovation and refurbishment works have been undertaken – and are still underway – to create a student hub offering a range of accommodation options. This scheme proposes to diversify the offer with the conversion of the decorated stone 1.5 storey neoclassical roadside building – potentially the architectural highlight of the site.

The existing building has been the subject of recent renovation and currently provides storage for the ongoing building works on site. Its conversion will be a light touch approach with limited structural intervention.

Although specialists have been consulted in connection with the previous phases of this development and their input is included within this document where appropriate based on the nature of the work the applicant has opted not to commission further reports.



## **2** Location

Excelsior Works lies approximately 300m to the East of Huddersfield Town Centre on St John's Road, the primary link between the town and Birkby – and ultimately the Grimescar Valley.

The collection of buildings sits on a change in level with a wooded bank to the west rising to a new development of semi-detached stone built houses and playing fields beyond. There are four elements loosely grouped around a courtyard:

To the South the recently completed three storey student apartment scheme which offers its gable with steel escape stairs overarchng the stone built basement stairs.

To the North a single span warehouse building with northlight roof,

To the Western side of the Courtyard a Student Townhouse scheme currently in build and to the East the application site, a 1.5 storey office building

Across St John's Road the levels are lower and an existing industrial development has been repeatedly refreshed most recently with elements of retail closer to the town centre.



*Site Location*

# 3 Design and Access Statement

## Architectural Design

The importance of the site as one of a number of gateways to Huddersfield's town centre has been stressed with the previous applications and the conversion of this elements continues the work undertaken to date. The lower level block frames the entrance to the Courtyard and reflects the impressive frontage of the main Excelsior Works building.

### 3.1\_Use:

As previously noted, Excelsior Works is a legacy of Huddersfield's industrial past and part of a continuous frontage of stone built warehouses dating from the 1800s. Although previously designated as commercial use the site is now derelict and the use has ceased. Based on the scale of the space it is mooted that building provided office space for the Warehouse buildings. The site is unallocated on the UDP.

### 3.2\_Amount:

The proposed redevelopment consists of 5 one bedroom student townhouses. The houses have been designed to provide >37sqm to meet space standards as suggested by the Local Plan.

### 3.3\_Layout:

The internal house layout follows the principle established by the rear block – 5 duplex units with primary living accommodation in the generously scale ground floor with a bedroom in the roof.

### 3.4\_Landscape:

The site will benefit from the works currently underway in association with the townhouses to the rear – raised planting beds and steps will improve the courtyard due for implementation following the removal of the suspended structure currently bridging the blocks.

### 3.5\_Appearance:

The proposed townhouses have been designed within the existing envelope. New pvc-U windows are proposed to existing openings to the roadside elevation, with vertically boarded front doors to the rear courtyard. New rooflights will be inserted into the existing tiled roof in line with manufacturers recommendations.

### 3.6\_Context:

The context of the development remains as cited for the previous scheme:

To provide a meaningful use for the redundant Industrial building which as previously noted is an attractive part of an interesting streetscene

And to create attractive, well proportioned and considered student housing within a highly sustainable location close to Huddersfield Town Centre.

# 4 Supporting Information

## 4.1: Planning Assessment

Excelsior works is a former industrial site which has fallen into disrepair. It is unallocated on the UDP.

The NPPF calls upon Local Authorities to “boost significantly the supply of housing” and sets out how Local Authorities should “ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area.” The NPPF goes on to state that “housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development” and where relevant policies in the development plan are out-of-date, Local Authorities should grant permission unless: - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or - specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

The space is ill-suited for a modern commercial use and the proposed conversion of the site to residential is seen as appropriate. NPPF Paragraph 22 states: “Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”

The application site on the edge of Huddersfield town centre is a highly sustainable one. The site is accessible for significant areas of shops, services and local employment along with easy access to the extensive public transport network. The proposals seek to bring a brownfield site back into beneficial and viable use, in accordance with NPPF paragraph’s 17 & 111. NPPF paragraph 23 also states that local planning authorities should recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

The regeneration of Excelsior Works will offer benefits on a number of levels:

A building which has fallen into disrepair will be brought back into meaningful use,

Additional housing will be created close to the town centre,

The local economy will benefit from students spending locally.

The use of the site for Students has been established by the neighbouring Apartment scheme and the applicant proposes to offer the Townhouses to extend the options available.

# **5** Supporting Information

The application for the conversion of the link building at Excelsior Works is considered to be low impact and self-explanatory. Consultants have advised where necessary but the applicant opines that extensive supporting information is not necessary.

## *5.1\_Structural Appraisal:*

The conversion of the existing building had been explored as part of previous applications but a structural survey was undertaken and the suitability of the existing building for residential conversion has been confirmed.

## *5.2\_Ecological appraisal:*

Although the application site lies within the bat alert area the building was derelict (with no roof) when the applicant acquired it and it has been accepted that the bat roost potential is negligible.

## *5.3\_Transport Assessment*

The site is located in a highly sustainable position with bus stops on both sides of the road directly in front of the building and within 300m of Huddersfield Train Station. There is no parking proposed with this scheme but cycle storage is available in the courtyard.

## *5.4\_Noise Assessment*

A noise survey was undertaken in association with the Student Apartment scheme submitted in 2018 and it is proposed to follow the recommendations of that report :

All windows will be fitted with glazing of minimum specification 6mm glass x 12mm air-gap x 6mm glass and a whole house vent will provide ventilation.