

Consultation Response from KC, Conservation and Design		
2021/93306 61-65, New Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2BQ		
Listed Building Consent for conversion of existing buildings, erection of split-level seven storey extension comprising four-storey stairwell, five-storey roof-top tower block and enclosed courtyard to form 31 dwellings and sub-division of the retail unit forming 61-63 New Street (within a Conservation Area)		
Date Responded: 27.6.22	Responding Officer: Sue Brooks	Responding Ref:
<p>61-65 New Street is part of a terrace of retail premises located within the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area. The facades face New Street which is one of the principal shopping streets within the town centre and the north facing side elevation faces Albert Yard. 61 New Street is a three-storey Grade II listed mid-terraced building which dates to the early 19th century. This property has a white lime rendered façade and stone slate roof, with a modern shop front on the ground floor, two pairs of tripartite windows on the first floor and two sash windows on the second floor.</p> <p>63 New Street is described within the same list description, and the building projecting to the east from the rear of 61 and 63 New Street is part of the same building and is therefore included in the listing. In recent years it has formed part of the same retail premises.</p> <p>Several Grade II listed buildings surround the site, including the former Prudential Assurance building at 69 and 71 New Street on the corner of the same terrace, several listed properties on the west side of New Street. In addition, several unlisted buildings within the immediate vicinity contribute to the character of the conservation area including The Albert public house which is of architectural interest.</p> <p>To the east of Albert Yard is the Grade II listed Huddersfield Library, a prominent building dating to 1937, and to the south of this is the Grade II listed Queensgate Market constructed in 1968-70. These buildings and the piazza surrounding the library are a key part of the Huddersfield Blueprint vision, with the regeneration of this area forming the proposed cultural heart of the town.</p> <p>19th century yards are characteristic of the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area and add interest when viewed from the main streets, reflecting the commercial and industrial past of the town. The scale of this building sits well in context with The Albert public house when looking west along Albert Yard, although unfortunately the significance and character of the yard has been reduced substantially by the construction of modern retail premises to the north, with a large blank brick wall and inadequate bin storage on this street. The Conservation and Design Team would welcome enhancements to this area.</p> <p>The Proposal</p> <p>The applicant proposed to convert the existing historic buildings at 61 and 63 New Street, with the construction of an apartment block above the rear section of the flat roofed 65 New Street to form 31 apartments.</p> <p>New Street elevation and retail units</p> <p>The elevation facing New Street will remain unchanged, with the ground floor of 63 New Street subdivided from one to two units. As the existing shop front is modern and 61 and 63 New Street was historically two units, we have no objection to the proposal to return this elevation to two units and welcome a proposal which brings this vacant floor space back into use. However, we would prefer traditional shop fronts to be reinstated as part of the proposal, using archive research to inform the design.</p> <p>Warehouse conversion</p> <p>The four-storey former warehouse building to the rear of 61 and 63 New Street appears from historic</p>		

maps to date to the mid-19th century rear and is a long, narrow four storey structure, built in coursed hammer dressed stone with a pitched hipped stone slate roof and ranges of windows on the upper floors.

The most prominent elevation of this building is the north elevation facing Albert Yard. This elevation is constructed in coursed hammer dressed stone with ranges of large timber framed windows on the upper floors, mostly sashes, fixed lights and casements with some leaded light glazing. Some windows appear to be original. At the west end of this elevation are loading doors on the upper floors which are indicative of the historic function, and on the ground-floor are later shop fronts, some blocked up and some with security shutters. A large section at the east end has been rebuilt and finished in painted render.

The east elevation faces a small yard set behind metal gates, with an external full height metal fire escape fixed to the building. This elevation and part of the north elevation is rendered and painted, with windows on all floors. The top floor of the south elevation is partially visible above a large enclosed flat roofed retail premises which has no significance or interest.

This building is typical of the 19th century warehouse buildings within Huddersfield and despite the later alterations which make a negative impact, including the render and external fire escape, the building itself makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. It could be enhanced by the reinstatement of traditional windows throughout, with natural stonework or a well-designed contrasting finish in the rendered areas, and well-designed treatment to the east elevation which is visible from the eastern end of the yard.

The warehouse is a narrow building which has been internally subdivided on the lower levels, with the top floor remaining a single space with exposed trusses and historic winding gear. The proposal is to convert all floor levels into apartments, with subdivision necessary to create habitable rooms.

Basement (ground floor of warehouse) – A single apartment is proposed, along with internal bin storage and a meter room for the apartments. A cycle store is proposed in the basement of the retail unit facing New Street and this is accessed via a set of internal steps. The Conservation and Design Team has concerns about the proposal to provide fully glazed residential accommodation at street level where anti-social behaviour may be a problem for the residents, with cycle storage accessed via steps. We would suggest that the street level space is more suited to cycle storage rather than residential accommodation, with the railings omitted from the proposal and the front basement used to serve the retail premises above. On the Albert Yard elevation the external shop front detailing should be amended accordingly.

Ground floor (first floor of warehouse) – Proposals within this space are acceptable, with the removal of non-historic partitions and subdivision to form two apartments. The retention of the masonry wall and fireplace / chimney breast is welcomed.

First floor (second floor of warehouse) – As above.

Second floor (third floor of warehouse) – The top floor of the warehouse retains some interesting historic features and detailing. The proposal is to subdivide this floor into two apartments, with the historic trusses remaining exposed, with a large, shared space area at the west end where the historic winding gear will be restored and retained. Although subdivision on the top floor will reduce the legibility of the space, it has been vacant for some time. The public benefits of bringing it back into use, while retaining historic features, outweighs the slight harm to the significance of the building.

Note: Where new finishes and partitions are proposed, no detail has been submitted to show how the historic internal details such as timber trusses, winding gear and fireplaces will be incorporated into the

proposal. If the application is supported, details need to be submitted and justified, with evidence that historic features of significance will be retained and incorporated into the proposal, and modern interventions such as surface finishes will not harm the significance or performance of the building.

Externals

The application states that the existing windows will be repaired or replaced to match the existing, with secondary glazing installed. In some cases, later windows with no historic interest have been inserted and we would recommend that these are replaced to reflect the design of the earlier windows.

The removal of metal window bars is proposed. If their removal causes damage to the stonework, this should be repaired with lime mortar to match the existing (cleaned) stonework, or with stone indent repairs to match the existing stone.

Sandblasting is proposed for the stonework. However, this can be an aggressive cleaning method and we would recommend that a more sensitive cleaning method is specified, with details and a method statement submitted for approval.

Any pointing should be carried out in lime mortar to match the original mortar and should not be strap pointed.

Where the external walls are rendered, the proposal is to remove this to expose the stonework. We would recommend that investigations are carried out to ensure that the substrate is coursed stonework and not a later infill. If not, alternative wall treatments should be submitted for approval.

A full height stair tower extension is proposed on the east elevation to provide upper floor access. Following revisions to the proposal, this is set back from the north elevation by one bay, with roller shutter doors at ground floor level to provide access to the retail units, and a small yard with metal gates. The removal of the fire escape and construction of a simple extension will enhance the character of the conservation area and warehouse by removing clutter from this area. However, the proposal for mid-20th century Crittal type windows and extensive areas of render on the extension, along with Crittal windows in the ground floor recessed openings of the warehouse, is unclear in this context.

We have no objections to an extension, although we would suggest that more consideration is given to the design and materials of the extension, gates and openings. If the application is supported, external material samples should be submitted for approval.

New apartment block

A new apartment block is proposed in the former yard area behind the historic warehouse, constructed above the existing retail premises. We have no objections to sensitively designed and small-scale development within this enclosed space. However, we are concerned about the height and design of the proposed structure and its impact on the setting of the nearby listed buildings and wider conservation area.

The height of the proposed apartment block is five storeys, constructed onto the existing two storey retail unit and basement. Due to the topography, the basement is at ground floor level towards the eastern end and therefore the proposal will result in a seven-storey building.

Context

The surrounding area is characterised by buildings of varying age, construction type and scale, many of which are within the conservation area. To the west is New Street, a wide retail street which is characterised predominantly by three storey terraces. Some date to the 19th and early 20th centuries,

with more recent buildings constructed in similar designs to complement and reflect the character of the older buildings. To the south is Ramsden Street where buildings are of a similar scale to those on New Street, except for 6 Ramsden Street which is a late 20th century, seven-storey office block that makes a negative contribution to the character of the street.

The conservation area boundary runs along Victoria Lane to the east of the site. 11-13 Victoria Lane is a late 19th century building constructed in ashlar stone with fine detailing and a later third floor added in a similar style. Adjacent to this is the three storey Albert Public House, a 19th century building with a corner entrance and a long elevation extending along Albert Yard. The detailing of this building is of high quality and original sash windows are retained throughout.

With the exception of the late 20th century office block on Ramsden Street, the height of the buildings in the immediate vicinity of the proposal site are similar, creating a relatively uniform streetscape.

Directly to the east of Albert Yard and outside the conservation area is the Grade II listed Art Deco Huddersfield Library, a substantial detached ashlar stone building with fine detailing, constructed in 1937 and situated within the Piazza, a pedestrianised area in the heart of the town. To the south of this is the Grade II listed Queensgate Market Hall, a reinforced concrete structure built in 1968-70. On the south side of Ramsden Street is Huddersfield Town Hall, a substantial and high-quality Grade II listed civic building constructed in ashlar stone.

Assessment

The proposed apartment block is a large flat roofed structure which extends above the predominant roofline within the immediate vicinity, particularly when viewed from the piazza to the south-east and north-east. The building is orientated from east to west, with the principal elevation facing north. This elevation is articulated with angled facades and stone cladding with a vertical emphasis, interspersed with large windows and dark grey aluminium cladding panels.

The east and west elevations are blank stone walls with little articulation. Although the visibility of the west elevation will be limited by the existing structures on New Street, the east elevation will be highly visible. This aspect is lacking in interest and rather overbearing when viewed from the Piazza. Although precedents for tall buildings have been set in this area in the past, with the late 20th century tower blocks at 6 Ramsden Street and Ramsden House nearby, both make a negative contribution to the character of the conservation area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings. The construction of another seven-storey block would cause further harm to this setting and character.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

With respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Chapter 12 of the NPPF requires development to be high-quality, visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, as well as the surrounding built environment and landscape.

Chapter 16 requires new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, with great weight given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, in this case the conservation area and listed buildings. Any harm to these requires clear and convincing justification, with public benefits provided which outweigh the harm.

A Heritage Impact Assessment has been produced and this looks at the impact of the development on the setting of the listed buildings within the site and surrounding it, and the significance of the conservation area itself. It states that the only view that would have an impact is from outside the library to the south-west, with the impact moderate as the building is set back from the street and consistent with the scale of the block at 6 Ramsden Street. It also states that the impact on the setting

of the nearby listed buildings is negligible, and minor in the case of Huddersfield Library.

We would agree that the harm is moderate (less than substantial) when viewed from the south-west, and this would also be the case for the setting of the library, in which the impact is not minor. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF requires public benefits to be provided to outweigh the less than substantial harm. The following public benefits have been submitted:

- the restoration of the listed building
- the introduction of a new bespoke building form to add to the narrative of the town
- new residential accommodation which will add to the housing need in the area and reduce the need for green belt land release
- and the use of local skills and contractors

The restoration of the vacant warehouse is clearly a public benefit although the subdivision of this building and loss of internal detailing does lead to less than substantial harm to its significance. The proposed restoration is minimal and could be more well considered. We support this proposal subject to the comments included in the section above.

We accept that the provision of residential accommodation is a public benefit, however it is unclear how the introduction of a seven-storey apartment block within the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area, and within the setting of several listed buildings including the library, is a public benefit or an enhancement.

Policy LP17 (Huddersfield Town Centre) states that proposals for new development within Huddersfield Town Centre will be supported where they provide space for town centre living and preserve and enhance the towns' cultural and architectural heritage. We accept that this proposal creates town centre living and includes the restoration of a historic building, but the construction of a tower block, in a sensitive location where the height of buildings is predominantly three storeys or lower, does not preserve or enhance the architectural heritage in this area.

Policy LP24 requires the form, scale, layout and details of all development to respect and enhance the character of the townscape. We accept that the visibility of the building will be limited from New Street and Albert Yard as the existing buildings will screen it to a large extent from these aspects. However, it will be highly visible from the south-east and north-east, particularly in context with Huddersfield Library and from the piazza and where the cultural heart regeneration scheme is proposed. We feel that a building of this scale will dominate the townscape from this aspect.

LP35 requires development proposals affecting a designated heritage asset to preserve or enhance the significance of the asset, with proposals retaining elements which contribute to the distinct identity of Kirklees and the significance of the conservation area.

The Huddersfield Blueprint recommends that residential opportunities are increased within the town centre by re-using our heritage stock, and in the case of the warehouse conversion this could be achieved to some extent.

The Blueprint incorporates the Cultural Heart at Queensgate, a regeneration initiative which is the most iconic vision within the Blueprint. It centres on the Piazza and library area, with current public consultation being undertaken for major proposals. The proposal for this area is extensive demolition, with the creation of event space, landscaping and new high-quality buildings. The construction of a seven-storey apartment block is likely to have a negative impact on this space as views of the building will significantly increase if the Cultural Heart project goes ahead.

Conclusion

The Conservation and Design Team supports a proposal which brings vacant floor space into use, with the conversion of the former warehouse and upper floors of 63 and 65 New Street into apartments, whilst retaining historic features and restoring the external historic fabric. We would prefer the shop fronts on New Street to be restored with traditional detailing so that this prominent elevation is enhanced.

However, we have concerns about the scale and design of the proposed apartment block, which will be highly visible from the Cultural Heart area, particularly from the proposed events space on the piazza and in context with the Grade II listed Huddersfield Library. We do not consider that the current proposal preserves or enhances the character of the conservation area from this aspect, with the justification unconvincing and insufficient public benefits submitted. Based on the information submitted, we are unable to support the proposal in its current form.

The preferred scenario would be the restoration and reuse of the former warehouse, whether this is for commercial, retail or residential space, without the construction of the new building. If some development can be justified, we would suggest that it is scaled back and reduced in size to reflect the predominant roofline, with consideration given to how the design will sit in context with the library and piazza, as well as the proposed landscaping of the Cultural Heart. We would suggest that, following amendments, 3D visuals are produced which show the building from Princess Alexandra Walk to the south-east, to assess any harm from this aspect.

If, however, this application is supported, we would recommend that the quality of the external finish of both buildings is controlled by condition and submitted for approval, to include the following:

- Full window and external door details for both the warehouse and new block, including sections and elevations showing configuration, opening lights, reveals, etc.
- All stone must be natural stone, samples to be submitted along with details of coursing and edge details.
- Render colour and texture.
- Stair tower window details.
- External material samples should be submitted to demonstrate that high quality and robust materials and cladding will be used.
- Architectural details should be submitted, including junction of roof and wall, window reveals, etc.