Consultation Response from KC, Conservation & Design

2023/93495 Land rear of, Yorkshire House, South Street, Dewsbury, WF13 1JT

Erection of hotel (within a Conservation Area)

Date Responded: 7.10.2024
Responding Officer: Sue Brooks
Responding Ref:

This consultation response follows the previous comments submitted for 2022/92313.

The proposal site is currently a car park directly adjacent to the boundary of the Dewsbury Town Centre Conservation Area to the north. It is adjacent to a former school building to the east which is dated 1843 and is of good architectural quality, and although outside the conservation area is a non-designated heritage asset. On the corner of School Street and within the conservation area is the Grade II listed 63 Daisy Hill.

Daisy Hill is a designated area within the Dewsbury Heritage Action Zone, a regeneration initiative within Dewsbury Town Centre which aimed to restore and enhance heritage assets and promote the quality of its environment. This has achieved some results over recent years and other projects are still ongoing. Daisy Hill is also a key area within the Dewsbury Blueprint, a 10-year plan for the town.

The predominant character of the Daisy Hill area is two and three-storey retail and commercial premises, many of which are terraced and date to the early 19th century. They are mostly constructed in natural stone with pitched slate and stone slate roofs. Some elements are in brick and some elevations have been rendered. School Street is more industrial in character, with a heavily altered three-storey former warehouse building and a smaller historic industrial building, along with 20th century infills. The former school at the southern end of School Street is a focal point when viewed from Daisy Hill, with the rear of the mid-late 20th century Yorkshire House dominating the background and causing harm to the setting of this building and the conservation area.

The applicant proposes a hotel on the site of the car park adjacent to Yorkshire House. A previous application was submitted and refused for a six-storey hotel, which would have dominated the setting of the former school. This has been amended to the current application which is for a four-storey building supported on columns with a small open car park beneath the building. The building has a flat roof and ranges of windows with no apparent architectural detailing to the surrounds. The external materials were previously red brick and render and have been amended to red brick and sandstone rainscreen cladding on the front and side elevations with a rendered rear (west) elevation, with grey uPVC windows.

A heritage statement has been submitted with the application. This states that the hotel is three-storeys high, elevated from the ground to enable parking and landscaping, so it is in effect a four-storey building. Its justification for the amended proposal is that derelict land would be brought into use thereby enhancing the setting of the conservation area, and the amendments to the scale, design and materials have reduced the harm to a lower level of less than substantial. It considers the public benefits to be substantial by boosting the local economy, creating employment opportunities and using a location which encourages sustainable transport.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF requires any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, namely the setting of the conservation area and nearby listed 63 Daisy Hill, to require clear and convincing justification. We do not consider the justification to be convincing enough and disagree that the submitted public benefits are substantial. We do not feel that the submitted justification is sufficient to outweigh the harm (Paragraph 202) and consider that a more sensitive building could be designed to bring the site into use.

As stated in our previous response, NPPF Paragraph 197 requires local authorities to take account of the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Although reduced in scale, we feel that the building is still at odds with the local character, with a flat rather than pitched roof, stone rainscreen cladding which we presume to be ashlar, and a lack of architectural detailing to the external elevations as well as an unusual design in this context, with the building set onto columns. We still consider the building to dominate the surrounding street scene, particularly the former school building, and we consider it to make a negative contribution to the local character.

We consider that a building more reminiscent of the traditional stone buildings within the immediate vicinity would be more suitable in this location and we would prefer a more traditional design, perhaps further reduced in scale with a pitched roof and coursed hammer dressed stone, and with window surrounds. We feel that, despite the amendments, the design and scale of the building do not respect or enhance the character of the townscape or the setting of the nearby heritage assets which are identified above and therefore the proposed development is contrary to policies LP24 and LP35 of the Kirklees Local Plan.

In conclusion, the Conservation and Design Team still have concerns about this proposal which has an impact on the setting of the conservation area, and we feel that the a more sensitive proposal could be designed, with more consideration given to the historic character of the locality.