

Consultation Response from KC, Conservation & Design
2023/93667 Storthes Hall Student Village, Storthes Hall Lane, Kirkburton, Huddersfield, HD8 0WA
Outline application for demolition of buildings and erection of residential development (up to 261 dwellings), redevelopment of Lodge Cottage for residential use and associated works
Date Responded: 29.2.2024
Responding Officer: Sue Brooks
Responding Ref:

The proposal site is a local plan allocation site (MDGB1).

Most of the existing buildings on the site were constructed in the 1990's as student accommodation for Huddersfield University on the site of the former Storthes Hall hospital. At the north-east corner of the site adjacent to the main entrance, is a Grade II listed lodge dating to 1903 along with Grade II listed entrance gate and gate piers from the same date. Within the site and facing towards the south-east boundary are two surviving hospital buildings from the early 20th century, the administration building and Arboretum.

This outline proposal is for the demolition of all buildings within the site, except for the listed lodge which will be converted into a dwelling, and the construction of a housing development. Access and layout are considered at this stage, with all other matters reserved.

Policy LP73 (Land at Storthes Hall) of the Kirklees Local Plan requires a heritage impact assessment to be produced, along with a pre-determination archaeological assessment. It requires non-designated heritage assets to be retained and re-used as part of any development proposals, unless adequate justification is provided for their loss, in accordance with LP7 and LP24. The setting of the Grade II listed lodge building, gate piers and gates should be safeguarded as part of development proposals.

A Heritage Statement has been produced as required and the lodge and gate piers have been safeguarded, with the significance and interest of the non-designated heritage assets assessed. In addition, a Planning Case Report has been submitted which provides limited justification for the proposed demolition of the administration building and the former ward block, the Arboretum (known as The Venue).

Housing development

Based on the information submitted, the layout of the development has a low impact on the setting of the nearby listed structures (the lodge and gateposts), with the curtilage of the lodge and a landscaped buffer, including several mature trees, remaining between the two sites.

The proposal site is bounded by mature trees on the north, east and south, enclosing it and minimising its impact on the wider landscape. The tree lined boundary alongside Storthes Hall Lane helps to obscure the development site from the road, and the retention of the existing dry-stone walls on this boundary respects the local character. The proposed low-rise residential development is likely to have a lower impact on the surrounding area than the existing development of predominantly 3 and 4 storey student accommodation blocks, subject to sufficient tree retention along this boundary.

The demolition of the administration building and the Arboretum (The Venue bar) is proposed as part of the scheme. Both buildings are part of the original hospital complex dating to the early 20th century and, although little of the surrounding historic context survives, these non-designated heritage assets are good quality buildings with local significance.

The Venue is constructed from coursed stonework with ashlar door and window surrounds, restrained detailing, multi-paned timber framed sash windows and red clay roof tiles. The central bay of the façade is flanked by symmetrical wings, each with a bay window. A central extension has been constructed between the two rear wings and this is of no interest. The building faces the south-east boundary of the site and immediately in front of it are several mature trees which contribute to its setting.

The administration building is also constructed in coursed stone with ashlar surrounds and red clay roof tiles. This building is symmetrical, with a gable on each side, each with a two-storey bay window and stone parapet. The central gable is set behind a single storey flat roofed portico in ashlar stone with a stone balustrade and a central doorway set between stone columns. The façade is impressive when viewed from the roadway on the south-east boundary of the site and is similar in design to the larger administrative building at the southern end of the hospital site (now part of a separate development). The rear wings and central atrium are more subservient to the main building and are of little interest, although they are likely to be original.

Paragraph 209 of the NPPF (20 December 2023) requires a balanced judgement to be made on applications that affect a non-designated heritage asset. In this case, the Heritage Statement assesses the significance and interest of the two buildings and concludes that the proposed demolition will give rise to harm and should be considered as part of a planning balance.

The Planning Case Report recognises that the two buildings have architectural and historic interest in the local context and considers that they are not appropriate for conversion. It does not provide an assessment of why these two buildings cannot be converted and incorporated into the development, as specifically referred to in Policy LP73 of the Local Plan. It refers to further details within the Design and Access Statement but there are limited references in this document. Both buildings are shown on the 'site features, opportunity and constraints plan' but they have not been identified as either constraints or opportunities. Their contribution to the character of the site and potential for retention as key features has not been assessed. To put it into context, the housing development to the south incorporates the substantial former hospital building, also a non-designated heritage asset from the same complex, and we consider that a similar principle could be applied to this site.

The conversion and re-use of these two buildings will allow high quality surviving buildings from the original hospital complex, along with several mature trees, to be incorporated into the scheme. We feel that this will create an enhanced sense of place. It will create interest and richness within the development, contributing to good design as referred to in Chapter 1 of the Design and Access Statement, and ensuring the retention and re-use of buildings which contribute to the distinct identity of the site (Policies LP24 and LP35, and Paragraph 209 of the NPPF).

We feel that the architectural interest, local significance as part of the former hospital complex, high standard of maintenance and locations of these two buildings within the site provide a good opportunity for conversion and subdivision into dwellings. We would recommend that the masterplan is revisited with these buildings incorporated into the design.

Lodge

The Heritage Statement states that this listed building will be brought back into residential use, with boundary treatments reinstated, thereby enhancing the heritage asset and bring a vacant building back into a sustainable use. We welcome a proposal which restores this building and boundary walls and look forward to a listed building consent application if applicable.

The immediate setting of the lodge is maintained by a landscaped buffer of trees, shrubs and boundary features around its curtilage, with an estate road and footway further separating the curtilage from the new development.

Associated works

Alterations to the two site accesses are proposed, with minor alterations to the boundary wall on the southern access. The northern site entrance will be altered, with the Grade II listed gateposts and gates retained in their current positions.

We have no objections to the access arrangements based on the information submitted.

Conclusion

In summary, the Conservation and Design Team accepts the principle of demolishing the modern buildings and the construction of a housing development on this Local Plan allocation site. We support the restoration of the listed lodge building and have no comments on the proposed site access arrangements.

However, we are unable to support the demolition of the administration building and the Arboretum (The Venue) and would recommend that the site layout is revised to incorporate these buildings into the proposal.

Note:

Once a suitable conclusion has been reached and a reserved matters application is submitted, we would suggest that the scale, design and external materials of the proposed dwellings are reconsidered to respect the character of the site itself, in line with Policy LP24 of the Kirklees Local Plan, rather than historic vernacular settlements further afield. The surviving early 20th century buildings within the site have a distinct character, with natural stone walls, red clay tiled roofs and early 20th century design detailing, and we feel that this character could be echoed within the wider site. The character of the adjacent site to the south should also be considered to avoid piecemeal development within the wider hospital site.