

Consultation Response from KC, Conservation & Design
2025/90889 Former Combs Hostel, Hall Lane, Thornhill, Dewsbury, WF12 0PL
Demolition of existing hostel and erection of residential development comprising 34 dwellings
Date Responded: 10/6/26
Responding Officer: SC
Responding Ref:

This is a resubmission of the Reserved matters application 2018/92842 with a mix of updated and new reports to reflect the fact the hostel building has subsequently been demolished and also current requirements of new housing applications. There are also new requirements regarding Biodiversity Net Gain, and further heritage information is sought regarding archaeology and heritage issues.

Detailed archaeological comments and conditions have been provided by WYAAS which should be taken into account, particularly in relation to the Scheduled Monument and potential remains in the grounds of the proposed housing site.

Historic England should be consulted due to the Scheduled Monument nearby.

Thornhill Hall (a grade II listed building and scheduled monument) lies on the opposite side of Hall Lane (**MONUMENT** : THORNHILL HALL MOAT AND SITES OF FORMAL GARDENS AND BOWLING GREEN, AND REMNANT OF PRE-17th CENTURY OPEN FIELD SYSTEM) and there are two listed buildings to the south east of the site (Thornhill Hall and Thornhill Hall Cottages) and large 17th Century listed barns, mistal etc with 19th Century alterations and a listed former Rectory within substantial grounds to the south west. Thornhill Conservation Area lies to the south and west.

[Thornhill Hall moat and sites of formal gardens and bowling green, and remnant of pre-seventeenth century open-field system, Non Civil Parish - 1009930 | Historic England](#)

Reasons for Designation of the Scheduled Monument

Around 6,000 moated sites are known in England. They consist of wide ditches, often or seasonally water-filled, partly or completely enclosing one or more islands of dry ground on which stood domestic or religious buildings. In some cases the islands were used for horticulture. The majority of moated sites served as prestigious aristocratic and seigneurial residences with the provision of a moat intended as a status symbol rather than a practical military defence. The peak period during which moated sites were built was between about 1250 and 1350 and by far the greatest concentration lies in central and eastern parts of England. However, moated sites were built throughout the medieval period, are widely scattered throughout England and exhibit a high level of diversity in their forms and sizes. They form a significant class of medieval monument and are important for the understanding of the distribution of wealth and status in the countryside. Many examples provide conditions favourable to the survival of organic remains.

The remains of Thornhill Hall survive well and demonstrate the changing use of the site over 500 years. Unusually, traces of the field system on which the moat was superimposed survive. Limited excavation has demonstrated that the remains of the buildings which formerly occupied the site survive well on the moated island. In addition, environmental material will survive well in the waterlogged deposits of the moat. Also unusual is the survival of evidence for the early formal gardens and bowling green which were contemporary with the seventeenth century hall.

Summary

Thornhill Conservation Area is of particular historic interest for its group of medieval and Jacobean historic sites and buildings; indeed some are amongst the most significant examples of their type in Kirklees. Development is proposed on a site that contributes to the significance of Thornhill Conservation Area, Thornhill Hall moated site and Thornhill Hall and its associated farmstead. As proposed the development would cause some harm to the significance of designated heritage assets. Conservation and Design therefore have concerns about the proposed development on heritage and design grounds.

Significance of the heritage assets affected

Thornhill Hall moated site (a scheduled monument of national importance) was the principal seat of the

Savile family from the fourteenth to the mid seventeenth centuries. The grade I listed Church of St Michael and All Angels dates from at least the 15th century and includes the fine Savile Chapel. There are many grade II listed buildings that originate from the 17th century including the Old Rectory, Combs Hall and the new Thornhill Hall. In the late nineteenth century Combs Colliery was opened to the north of the conservation area, stimulating the construction of terraced and back-to-back cottages for its workforce including Hall Lane Cottages and Prospect Terrace, which are in the conservation area.

Thornhill has grown organically over many centuries, its street layout and the differing ways in which properties relate to the streets reflects this. Earlier properties are in more generous plots (the Old Rectory, Thornhill (new) Hall), set back from the road and sometimes at right angles to it (as at Combs Hall). Later properties are often in short rows built close to the street or set at right angles to it. East of Church Lane and The Combs, Thornhill has a rural character, with low density development. With the exception of the churchyard, the village to the west of Church Lane and The Combs is of a denser grain and is more urban in character.

The proposed development site was agricultural land, probably associated with Thornhill Hall, until it was partly developed in the late twentieth century as a school. The site contributes to the significance of Thornhill Conservation Area, Thornhill Hall moated site and Thornhill Hall and its associated farmstead. The former hostel buildings detracted from their setting by virtue of their condition and massing. The areas of open land, trees and hedges contribute positively and reinforce the rural nature of Hall Lane.

Impact of the proposals on significance

The proposals are for 34 dwellings on the site of the former Combs Hostel on the north side of Hall Lane. The decrease in density from west to east will assist in blending development into the surrounding area. It is recommended to retain the existing informal hedged boundaries to Hall Lane to reinforce its rural character and to maintain the setting of the conservation area, scheduled monument and grade II listed Thornhill Hall. Landscaping using native trees and hedges along the boundaries and within the site would be encouraged to make the development more appropriate within the setting of the Scheduled monument, listed buildings and Conservation Area.

Natural stone predominates within the conservation area and within proximity to this site. Therefore, it is recommended that natural stone would be most appropriate for the whole development. It is recommended to omit the brick terrace, and replace with natural stone to be more appropriate to the setting of the Scheduled Monument, listed buildings and Conservation Area.

Natural slate would be encouraged for the roofs. Render would be discouraged or minimised, as it is not a local traditional material and the appearance could deteriorate if there is lack of appropriate maintenance.

As previously advised by Conservation & Design Team the following amendments are recommended to enhance the designs to make the development more appropriate within the setting of the Scheduled Monument, listed buildings and Conservation Area.

- Simplify roof forms. Houses in Thornhill Conservation Area and nearby generally have simple pitched roofs. The roof forms of the submitted house types could be simplified by reducing or omitting the dormers and small gables.
- Simplify window/door openings. The fenestration arrangement to the rear of house type D lacks coherence. The windows with 3 or 4 lights are more traditional in appearance and are combined with overtly modern openings such as the large ranges of bifold doors, these could be reduced in size.

- Vary the house designs, sizes, heights and orientation to reduce the regularity of forms to provide a more organic layout.

In summary the proposed development would cause some harm to the setting of the affected heritage assets. Relevant Policies/Guidance Paragraph 207 of the NPPF requires that we should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

The proposed development site is an allocated housing site reference HS60. It is a requirement of the allocation that a Heritage Impact Assessment and pre-determination archaeological assessment are submitted, the HIA and archaeological information submitted is very limited. Policy LP24 of the Local Plan requires that the form, scale, layout and details of all development respects and enhances the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape. Policy LP35 requires that development proposals affecting a designated heritage asset (or an archaeological site of national importance) should preserve or enhance the significance of the asset. We should avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal (NPPF para. 221). Amendments are encouraged to the form and detail of the proposed development and proposals for the landscaping in order to minimise the impact of the development on the setting of the conservation area, listed buildings and scheduled ancient monument.

Thornhill Rectory Park will be a particular amenity for the residents of the new development. There are currently two informal entrances to the park from Hall Lane. The park would benefit from an improved entrance and heritage interpretation at this point, the boundary wall may also require repair. A contribution from the developer could be sought to deliver this improvement secured by a section 106 agreement.

Conclusion

Conservation and Design have some concerns about the proposed development on heritage and design grounds with particular regards to LP24 and LP35 of the Local Plan and paragraph 221 of the NPPF.