

Consultation Response from KC, Conservation & Design

Application: 2025/91645 & 2025/91122

Address: Turnbridge Mills, Quay Street, Huddersfield, HD1 6QT

Proposals: REVISED/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RECEIVED. Listed Building Consent for redevelopment of site for mixed-use E(g) (i, ii and iii) and B8 including: demolition of buildings and re-cladding of southern elevation of retained adjoining building; retention, conversion and renovation of existing mill/office/workshop/engine house building including alterations; erection of two new buildings; formation of two vehicular access points, service yard and parking areas; and other associated works.

Comments:

Turnbridge Mill site is located on Quay Street, this is just outside of the Huddersfield Town Centre but within the setting of Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area. On the site is a Grade II listed Hirst Mill, to the east the Grade II Chimney and directly next to this is the Scheduled Turn Bridge and to the south of the Grade II John L Brierleys Mill.

The proposals are for the redevelopment of a mixed – use site. This includes the demolition of several buildings on the site including a grade II listed building that was listed in May 2025, retention and conversion of the existing mill/office/workshop/ engine house building and the erection of two new buildings with the formation of two vehicular access points and associated service yard and parking.

The following buildings are listed or scheduled monuments and have their list descriptions below:

JOHN L BRIERLEYS MILL – listed September 1978

John L Brierley's Mill II 2. 1846 (dated). Hammer dressed stone. Pitched slate roof. Coped gable ends. 7 storeys. 11 window ranges, 6 in end elevations. Venetian window in top floor of end elevations.

Chimney – listed May 2012

The chimney at Turnbridge Mills is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: Architectural Interest: a good example of elegant architectural treatment applied to a utilitarian industrial structure in the mid-Victorian period. Setting: the chimney forms a prominent landmark feature of Huddersfield's skyline and contributes to the setting of the adjacent scheduled Turn Bridge across the Huddersfield Broad Canal. Group Value: with the buildings of Turnbridge Mills, that to the south of Quay Street being listed Grade II.

Hirst Mill Reasons for Designation – listed May 2025

The Spinning Block at Turnbridge Mills (Hirst's Mill), Huddersfield, built in 1871-1873 to designs by John Kirk and Sons, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest for the good quality of its design and form, with decorative detailing including ashlar lintel bands and projecting sill bands to the main body of the building, and Italianate-style windows to the projecting stair tower; for the legibility of its interior layout and the fireproof structure, which retains cast-iron columns, cast-iron beams and segmental brick jack-arches; as a good example of a C19 stone-built cotton mill in West Yorkshire, an area more commonly associated with the wool and worsted industries.

Group value:

* for its strong functional, visual and historical relationship with the chimney at SE 14942 16846 (Grade II), and visual group value with John L Brierley's Mill to the south side of Quay Street (Grade II) and the scheduled Turn Bridge across the Huddersfield Broad Canal.

Turn Bridge – Scheduled Monument

The Turnbridge Mills site, spanning both sides of the road, holds considerable heritage group value. The collection of buildings, constructed from the 1890s through the 1990s, forms a coherent collection of industrial buildings that illustrates the evolution of Huddersfield's industrial development over more than a century. While two of the buildings on the site are individually listed, the remaining structures may fall under curtilage listing as defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. However Historic England have visited the site over a number of years to list different elements. So, if the buildings all held the heritage value to be listed, they would have been individually listed.

Proposed works to Mills

The proposals include the demolition of existing buildings, the conversion and renovation of an existing building, and the erection of a new building for mixed-use. The overall aim of the proposals is to provide a harmonious design concept for its location.

Mill Building A is being retained as this building is currently leased and is viable to be retained and incorporated in the new layout.

Mill Building B (Hirst Mill) is a Grade II listed building, designated in May 2025 for its architectural and historic interest. It is a well-preserved example of a 19th-century stone-built cotton mill, featuring Italianate-style windows, ashlar lintel bands, and original cast iron columns and beams. Its prominent canal-side position contributes strongly to the character and setting of the industrial complex. However, this is a late example of a mill site and there are no surviving historical machines in the property when it was listed. Architecturally building B isn't exceptional in its design compared with Building H which was listed due to its unusual roof construction.

Mill Building B occupies a prominent position along the canal elevation and makes a significant contribution to the visual character and historic integrity of the site. Its scale, massing, and architectural detailing establish a strong relationship with the waterway and adjacent structures, reinforcing the cohesive industrial setting. The proposed loss of this building would result in a substantial alteration to key views of the site, diminishing the sense of enclosure and continuity along the canal frontage. Furthermore, its removal would weaken the spatial and historical relationship between the remaining buildings, eroding the overall legibility and heritage value of the site. However good quality landscaping should be considered carefully if demolition is approved.

Other buildings within the site, including Buildings C, G, and E, are of low heritage significance, while Buildings N and F are considered to have no heritage value. Building D, although not listed, retains a historic relationship with the mill complex and contributes positively to the streetscape.

Building B is structurally sound overall, as confirmed by the structural survey; however, the roof requires significant investment to address its current defects before the upper floor can be brought back into use. At present, the lower floors are occupied, but the tenants have been served notice and are relocating. The existing tenants pay below market rent, which has not generated sufficient income to fund essential repairs. Once vacated, the building will be entirely empty and could decline even further making its future questionable.

Over the years, various options have been explored to bring the building back into full use; however, none have proven viable or attracted sufficient market interest to secure a development partner. While residential conversion has been considered, the building's industrial location makes it an unattractive proposition, and market evidence demonstrates that such schemes in historic buildings in Huddersfield are not viable without significant gap funding. This is supported by examples such as The George and Estates Buildings in the town centre, which, despite being in more central locations, have faced similar viability challenges. Furthermore, any conversion would require substantial internal alterations, including the installation of a second staircase and an additional lift, representing significant cost implications that further undermine feasibility.

The sequential options appraisal states that a do-nothing approach had been considered but it is unrealistic to consider that a listed building can simply be mothballed. The building would still need to be maintained and repaired but with no income from the building this wouldn't be possible, and the building quality would further decline.

The applicant has demonstrated efforts to market the property over a substantial period; however, interest has been minimal. They have explored funding opportunities through bodies such as Historic England and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), but these sources do not provide sufficient funds to bridge the viability gap required to retain Mill Building B. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that alternative ownership models—such as not-for-profit, charitable, or public ownership—should also be considered. However, given the significant roof repairs currently required and the ongoing maintenance costs, it is highly unlikely that a charity or not-for-profit organisation could feasibly take on the building and sustain its upkeep.

One type of funding that is available is from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), but this is reliant on Paxmans relocating to this site within the designated Investment Zone adjacent to the new National Health Innovation Campus. Without this funding Building D would not receive any investment and the long-term future of all the heritage assets on this site could be brought into question. So, allowing the demolition of one mill and retaining another with the funding to repair the building and bring it back into full use could be seen as a positive compromise. This opportunity may not occur again and would leave the whole site in danger.

Buildings C, G, and E are considered to have low heritage significance, and their loss is not anticipated to result in a substantial impact on the setting of the identified heritage assets. The primary concern regarding the demolition of Building C relates to the adjacent chimney and whether the chimney is physically attached to Building C. To address this, it is recommended that a planning condition be imposed requiring a detailed assessment and report. This report should confirm the structural relationship between the chimney and Building C and outline measures to ensure the chimney's protection and preservation during and after demolition works.

Building N, the canopy, and Building F would result in no heritage harm due to their lack of significance within the overall industrial complex and its historical development. Building F replaced a four-storey vacant mill building originally associated with Hirst Mill, which was demolished in 1988 to create a yard capable of accommodating modern-sized lorries. Consequently, Building F adds no heritage value to the site.

Policy

The pros and cons of this application need to give careful consideration to Paragraph 214 of the NPPF which states that where substantial harm would be caused to the significance, local authorities should refuse consent unless the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the significant harm to significance. Or all of the following are apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

An independent viability assessment has been undertaken for the council and assessed the proposals against the test in the NPPF. After all the options were reviewed they did conclude that there are no viable options without grant funding and viability fundamentally depends on market demand, improved values, and grant funding.

Design

The reuse of the boundary wall from Building B is welcomed as it retains an element of the site's historic character. However, the area where Mill Building B once stood, adjacent to the proposed service yard, presents an opportunity for a high-quality landscape design. This should incorporate high quality materials and lighting that reflect the site's industrial heritage, while softening the hard edge of the service yard. Interpretation boards would be beneficial to explain the history of the site and illustrate its evolution, ensuring the loss of Mill B is recorded and understood by the public. Good examples of landscaping can be found at similar mills in the area like Sunny Bank Mills and Saltaire Mill.

The proposed new building adopts natural stone and dark grey panels with a grey roof, following the horizontal lines of Building D. The window design complements Building D and does not detract from the original buildings. Where possible, the reuse of original mill stone would enhance the design. It is recommended that shutters on the east elevation be recessed to reduce their visual dominance. While the design is simple and respectful, it is not exceptional; therefore, the justification for replacing a listed building with a lesser design should be carefully considered. The overall public benefit of the scheme may warrant this loss, but this balance should be clearly demonstrated.

The extent of car parking on the site has been justified; however, consideration could be given to relocating some spaces to a nearby site or even a multi-story car park on a site close to Quay Street to reduce the visual impact on the listed chimney, surrounding listed mills and the scheduled monument, Turnbridge.

If gates are proposed for the service yard, their design should be sympathetic to the industrial heritage of the site.

As Building D is being retained and significant investment is planned, it would be beneficial to standardize the window design across the building. All windows should ideally be wooden or aluminium with a six-pane configuration to ensure consistency.

The design of the substation requires further consideration. Its current form is unsympathetic and, given its prominent location visible from Old Leeds Road, it should be redesigned to better integrate with the site and respect its historic context.

Conclusion

Overall, Conservation and Design are supportive of the scheme; however, the loss of Mill Building B would constitute substantial harm to the group of properties on Quay Street. This harm may be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal, which represents the optimum viable use of the site. There are concerns that if this scheme isn't implemented then the site may become redundant, and buildings left vacant and partially sub-let. Which will have a negative impact on the whole area and the heritage assets. This scheme is viable and can bring the site fully back into use.

Although the demolition of Mill Building B is significant, the development plans have evolved considerably since the original pre-application stage. The retention of Mill Building D provides a valuable compromise and some mitigation, helping to preserve the group value of the site, a sense of enclosure and the industrial character of the area.

If the application is recommended for approval, a condition should be imposed to ensure that the demolition of Mill Building B does not occur until the programme for the new build is confirmed, in accordance with paragraph 217 of the NPPF.

While the site does sit in the setting of the Huddersfield Conservation Area, the proposals do not significantly impact on its setting.

Summary of Recommended Conditions

- A detailed structural report on the chimney, including analysis of how removing surrounding buildings may affect its stability.
- A comprehensive Method Statement for the demolition of Mill Building B and C.
- A report outlining all measures to protect the chimney during construction, demolition works and ongoing use of the site including vehicular movements.
- Full documentation and archaeological record to level 3 of Mill B, C, E and G prior to demolition.
- Interpretation boards created and located on site to illustrate the development of the site.
- Written confirmation that funding is secured for repairs to Building D.
- Confirmation that Paxmans will take on the site and are not considering alternative locations.