

8th June 2021

Nick Hirst
Kirklees Planning Service
Kirklees Council
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Civic Centre III
Market Street
Huddersfield HD1 2JR

Objection to planning application 2021/91638 – Hart Street, Newsome

Dear Mr Hirst,

I'm writing on behalf of the Newsome Mills Campaign. We wish to object to planning application number 2021/91638.

Newsome Mills has been recognised as being of both regional and national importance for our textile heritage, and for the special contribution that the mill made to the Newsome area. The site is a vital part of Newsome's local identity and gives citizens of the area a sense of belonging. Newsome Mills includes Grade II Listed structures, including the landmark clock tower, which would be affected by this scheme.

The proposed development would involve the destruction of the nineteenth century mill pond and culvert (or 'leat'), which are important features of the Newsome Mills site. The development would also impact on the coach house buildings which border the mill pond. All these buildings are contemporary with the Grade II Listed structures at Newsome Mills, being constructed in the 1880s. The nineteenth century pond (the southern pond of the two) is the oldest surviving part of the mill complex, and residents are keen to preserve it.

The nineteenth century mill pond gives context to the Newsome Mills site. Unlike the majority of mills which were built along water courses, Newsome Mills stands on a hillside overlooking Huddersfield. The founders took advantage of the local geography, choosing a site that is a natural sink fed by a number of natural springs. A network of land drains was placed between Castle Hill and Newsome to direct more of this water towards the mill. The mill pond is clear evidence of the relationship between the mill and its local environment.

A development which fails to make provision for retaining this pond would destroy a key part of our local heritage. It would also leave the remaining buildings obscured by modern housing that would not be in-keeping with the materials or character of the rest of the site. Despite the fire of November 2016 which destroyed the upper three floors of the four storey mill and its interior, this is still the most prominent building in Newsome. We ask you to consider the impact of this proposed scheme on our local heritage.

Importantly, the relationship between the clock tower and the other buildings and structures at Newsome Mills can still be seen clearly today. Preserving this pond, along with the listed structures and also the coach house buildings between the two (which are in use as dwellings and business premises) helps with retaining the identity of the mill site, and avoids the risk of it becoming an isolated, out of context clock tower. Removing the ponds and the vista of the mill site from the village centre would take away this important context.

The ponds in their own right are a key part of the character of Newsome village. The application does not acknowledge this, and makes no attempt to retain the heritage features on the site. It also does not appear to take account of how prominent this whole site is in Newsome.

The view that the mill ponds and green space at Hart Street are an essential part of the character of our area was supported by the Planning Inspectorate in 2009, who then ruled against an appeal for a similar application on this site, stating that development of this land “would have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area.” The current proposals are unsympathetic to the Newsome Mills site and to Newsome village.

The southern-most wall of the nineteenth century pond is also the retaining wall for the strip of greenspace along present day Naomi Road, which supports the avenue of protected trees on the site. This avenue of trees lines the approach to the gateway of Newsome Mills and is a distinctive part of our local identity (it's one of just two avenues of protected trees in Newsome village).

Our campaign was set up to make sure that local people have a voice in the future of Newsome Mills. We have supported the redevelopment of listed buildings at the mill to bring them back into use. We have also supported previous plans to build housing on the area of the mill site between Ruth Street and White Hart Drive (off Hart Street), which is brownfield land. These plans would have brought more of the existing buildings at Newsome Mills back into use and maintained the character and appearance of the area.

In the Kirklees Local Plan, this alternative part of the site is now identified as housing land which can support 69 new dwellings. In contrast, planning application 2021/91638 is sited on land that is not allocated for housing. It would not retain any of the existing historic structures or bring them back into use – and it would be damaging for other parts of the Newsome Mills site.

Although we note the current advice from the Planning Service that it is difficult to assign group value to the structures which are in different ownership at Newsome Mills, we have included a reminder note about the case for curtilage listing of the nineteenth century pond. (Appendix A).

This objection is principally about the heritage aspects. However, we also wish to emphasise that this site is a valued open space in our busy village. It's right next to a very heavily used crossroads, on one of the main routes out of Huddersfield town centre. It provides much needed relief for the people who live in the area and has become even more a source of solace over the difficult past year. As the last remaining open green space in the village centre, it has a high amenity value for local residents and we hope this will be considered.

Residents are very worried about the drainage issues that would be caused by the loss of the mill ponds. The ponds have a regulatory effect on the water table in the Newsome area. Many natural springs feed into the ponds, and this helps to prevent flooding in properties throughout Newsome and Primrose Hill.

The mill ponds provide a habitat for wildlife, including nesting birds and bats which feed above the water. A body of water must be maintained on the site in order to support this wildlife. The avenue of trees along the Naomi Road site boundary are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order. The trees stand several feet above the ground level of the rest of the site, being retained by the high wall of the nineteenth century mill pond. It is very likely that the removal of the mill pond walls would undermine the root systems of these protected trees.

There is no information in the planning application about how these significant challenges would be overcome or how potential harm would be mitigated.

The proposed development would significantly undermine the character of the Newsome Mills site, impacting on the most prominent place in Newsome, and would have a damaging effect on the wider Newsome area. It would undermine our local identity and this would have a serious impact on people's wellbeing.

We object to the scheme as it would destroy a key part of our local heritage, it would adversely affect the health and wellbeing of local residents, and it would take away wildlife habitat. The proposals are not in the best interests of our community.

Kirklees Council have made a strategic commitment to work in a place based way, listening to and working with citizens. There has been no community engagement around these plans, which are for the most prominent area in Newsome, and the aspirations and concerns of local people have been ignored.

We ask you to ensure that the voices of Newsome's residents – particularly those who live on the Newsome Mills site, those whose homes border this site and those who live nearby – are heard, considered and responded to as part of the decision making process.

Yours sincerely,

(for the Newsome Mills Campaign)

Appendix A: The case for curtilage

There is a strong argument for curtilage listing of the structures on the site of the planned scheme, which are contemporary with the listed buildings at Newsome Mills. This has previously been acknowledged by the Planning Service at Kirklees Council.

The nineteenth century mill pond meets all three criteria for determining, as a question of fact, whether a structure can be considered to fall within the curtilage of a listed building. The three relevant factors (stated in: *A-G v Calderdale BC* [1983] 46 P.&C.R. 399 by Stephenson L.J.) are:

1. Physical 'layout' of the listed building and the structure

The nineteenth century mill pond is physically attached to the listed structures via a culvert (or 'leat'). These structures are only separated from the former four storey mill by the mill yard (present day Ruth Street), which was formally adopted as a road in recent years. The pond is located directly in front of the main building of Newsome Mills, and the relationship between the two structures is evident in the layout of the site.

2. Ownership

All the land at Hart Street formed part of the Newsome Mills site at the date when listed building status was first granted (1978). This common ownership is a key factor. This land has been part of the Newsome Mills estate since the nineteenth century, and any proposals for this site must be considered in that context.

3. Use or function

The functional relationship between the mill pond and the main mill buildings is very clear. The ponds and the coach house buildings are ancillary to the main mill building, the purpose of the ponds being to supply water for use in the manufacturing process. The functioning of the listed mill building was dependent on its mill pond, so the relationship between these structures is very clear.