

65844 – Former Mondi Mill, Bridge Street, Ramsbottom

Erection of 72 no. dwellings including the retention and conversion of 2 existing buildings to residential use (5 no. units), the retention of a chimney and the demolition of a derelict building, together with engineering operations to create a development platform and associated parking, landscaping, drainage, the layout of internal estate roads and footways and other associated works.

This resubmission – 65844 does not address the comments made on the previous application 65217 on the 20/04/2020. The issues surrounding the impact on the character, appearance and setting of Ramsbottom conservation area by the design, size, mass, scale, palette and materials of the proposed house types have not been addressed and the proposed house types do appear to be any different from those proposed in the first application. As such my comments on the first application are wholly applicable to this resubmission and are summarised as follows:

The proposed house types, design and materials would be incongruous to the character of the conservation area and as such would have a negative impact on its character, appearance and setting. They appear to be off the peg house types and design which can be seen repeated at the applicants' completed sites at Christy Brow, Hyde, Garrett Manor, Worsley and Moss Lea Park, Bolton. The heritage statement does not assess the significance of the conservation area and its setting or the potential impact of the development on that significance, combined with a justification for any harm, but attempts to try to argue the why the proposed house types are acceptable not what their impact might be.

The proposed house type materials of predominantly brick and render would be an incongruous feature in the setting of the conservation area. The design of the proposed house types would represent an incongruous feature in the setting of the conservation area. The height of the houses should be limited to two storey as three storey and above would have an over dominant visual impact on the setting of the conservation area. The design concept of the proposed houses consist of high front facing piked gables, large dormer windows, bays, asymmetrical sited bays and front facing piked gables. These design features represent a mixture of architectural styles from elements of Arts and Crafts to inter-war 1930s semi-detached. As such they would represent an incongruous feature in the conservation area and its setting.

The retention of the non-designated heritage assets is welcomed, although their setting would be altered. It is accepted that there may now be little remaining legibility of the previous use of the site as a paper mill, however the harm the proposal would represent to the conservation area far outweighs the harm to the setting of the non-designated heritage assets. The bund to the south of the site, whilst it is visually pleasant, it is not a natural landscape feature or an historic one.

Paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) say the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications

that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The proposed retention and conversion to residential use of buildings A and B, commonly accepted as being A – the mills’ administrative offices and B – an engineering workshop is welcomed. The proposed changes to the external appearance of building A are minimal and would retain its important architectural features, which together with its evidential value as a factory office would retain the remaining legibility of the site of its former industrial use.

Building B is less significant and has been much altered and as such its proposed alterations in order to adapt the building to a residential use is also acceptable.

Both buildings A and B have been weighed in the balance of paragraph 197 of the NPPF. It must be stressed the proposed adaptations are only acceptable with the proviso that in building A no window or door openings are moved, removed, blocked up or altered in any way and no architectural features such as lintels, string courses, hoods and ashlar etc are removed or altered.

Details of new window and door openings for buildings A and B should be submitted to the local planning authority for approval prior to the commencement of any works.

Conclusion

The proposed layout, house type, design and materials of the development for the reasons given would represent an incongruous feature in the conservation area and in its setting and would be visible in views in and out of the conservation area. The proposed development should be built from stone and no higher than two storeys height in order to match the vernacular construction of the built form and preserve the special character and distinctiveness of the conservation area. The proposal would not comply with *inter alia* paragraph 200 of the NPPF:

“Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably”.

Other than the conversion of buildings A and B and the demolition of Building C the proposal cannot be supported in conservation terms as it would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area or its setting as required by section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 or accord with the aims of Policy 4 of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

The proposal would conflict with paragraphs

189,190,192,193,194,196,197,199,200,201 of the NPPF.

Mark Kilby

Conservation Officer

14/12/2020.