

Memo

To	Stephen Irvine	Date	12 February 2016
From	Karen Heverin	Ext	3717
Subject	Construction of the New Saddleworth School PA/337301/15		

Memorandum

The proposal

The proposal is to construct a new Saddleworth School (for ages 11 to 16) with associated sports fields and pitches, external recreation and teaching space together with parking, landscaping and associated works. This would be on the site of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works, Huddersfield Road, Diggle. Three other applications have been submitted for this site. These have included an application for the demolition of five buildings on this site and an application to remove part of the listed link bridge connecting the listed office building to the building to the rear. I have commented on these proposals separately and advised that I do not consider adequate information has been forwarded to assess the impact of the loss of the link, and I do not support the loss of the works buildings for a number of reasons including the impact on the setting and context of the listed building, canal and other designated assets. However, these objections were made under the separate applications, therefore I will not reconsider these losses, and my comments on this proposal will be based on the information before me.

In assessing this application I have considered Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Chapter 12 of the NPPF and Policy 24 of the Core Strategy. I have also referred to guidance on settings and legal cases, particularly *Barnwell Manor v East Northamptonshire District Council 2014*, which expressed the necessity to give 'considerable importance and weight' to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

Section 66(1) of the Act states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in the exercise of planning functions special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

In respect to Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Governance and Legal Director of English Heritage ('Legal Developments' Conservation Bulletin Issue 71: Winter 2013) states that the courts have said that these statutory requirements operate as '*a paramount consideration*' and '*the first consideration for a decision maker*'.

The site of the proposed school

The proposed school is situated on the site of the former Loomworks. The demolition of the works buildings is to be considered under a separate application. The loomworks are currently disused. However, they contribute significantly to the setting of the Grade II Listed office building, which is situated just outside the boundary of the site covered by this application. This site currently

includes pitched faced local stone, piked elevations, pitched roofs with slate coverings, and traditional architectural detailing which lends context to the listed building. Whilst this site incorporates a large industrial works, it provides an architectural counterpoint to the gothic listed office building. Its industrial character and stone structures contribute to the integration of this large and highly visible site, into the surrounding rural character of the Diggle valley and setting of a number of designated assets. As stated I am unable to support the demolition of these structures. However, I will now consider how the proposed building will impact on the heritage significance of the area, if this demolition application were to be approved.

Impact

The Grade II listed office building

All elements of the proposed works will impact on the setting of the listed office building. At present the loomworks provides the historic context for the office building and the utilitarian architectural style of the pre-1948 works buildings, in the main, provides a harmonious architectural counterpoint to the gothic splendour of the office building. I refer you to my detailed comments on the characteristics of these buildings in my earlier consultation. With these positive aspects, assessed to be of medium significance, in mind, I have now considered the current proposal.

I do not believe a clear elevational view of the listed building with the proposed school in the background has been provided. However, from the information I have, I consider the scale, massing, design and materials to be of detriment to the setting of the listed building, and that the introduction of this development will result in a loss in terms of historic and aesthetic character.

The NPPF states within para. 131

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

In this instance, I do not consider the new development will make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. I consider the size of the building will diminish the primacy of the listed building on this site and, although its overall height has been retained at a lower level than the clock tower, it will nevertheless appear large and imposing.

In addition, the introduction of rooftop plant, high fencing, and particularly a bin store and sprinkler tank close to the listed building, are again of detriment to the setting and further reinforce my view that the proposal is not of the quality of design and detail I would expect for a large scale development in this highly visible location.

The views of the building are at present enhanced by the rural surroundings of the site. This will be diminished by the introduction of playing fields and the associated illumination – all of which will lend an urban character to the setting of the listed building.

In addition to the impact of the various elements of the site on the setting of the listed building, I have not been presented with details of how the redevelopment of the site will:

‘increase the attractiveness of the Listed office building to potential future occupiers’

The listed building, whilst losing its historical and architectural context, has been excluded from the site boundary. Documents accompanying the transportation application note the building cannot be used for educational purposes and the building would now be accessible along a private road, with gates and a 1.8m high fence to either side of it. I understand there are now suggestions of how the building could be used and I suggest clarification is sought on the potential uses of the building and how its attractiveness will be increased to ensure it is brought back into a suitable condition and use.

In conclusion, I have considered the impact of the proposal on this listed asset using guidance and the Historic England Good Practice Advice Note 3. Whilst the construction of the school will not impact on the listed building physically, it will, when accompanied by the loss of the works buildings, nevertheless, cause significant harm to the setting of the listed building. As such, the public benefits of the proposal should be considered, including the likelihood of the listed building being brought back into use.

The designated heritage assets located on the canal, and the canal

The proposed school will be constructed close to the canal. As discussed in my previous comment, at present, the canal benefits from a largely rural setting to the valley floor, with the works part of the former loomworks site adjacent to the tow path. These traditional buildings, water tower and chimney are highly visible from the canal and provide a historic and architectural context to the canal and its structures, which benefits its setting.

The proposed building is not of similar merit. Its large, imposing form, materials and design are not considered to be of a design which will allow them to make a similar positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, as noted in the NPPF. I consider they will form an incongruous addition to the setting of the heritage assets and the canal and this will be further exacerbated by the introduction of the playing fields and large scale lighting installations, and the changes in level to alter the surrounding landscape with the introduction of gabions and so on.

As such, I also consider this will result in harm to the setting of the nearby listed Bridge 69 and this part of the canal.

Surrounding listed buildings and Holly Grove Conservation Area

A number of additional listed buildings and a conservation area surround the application site and I believe will be adversely affected by the proposal. In these instances, the LPA shall have special regard to 'preserving or enhancing' features of special interest or the settings of these assets.

I consider the proposal will have a negative impact on the setting and views from, and of, Hollin Greave Farmhouse, Holly Grove Cottages, Holly Grove Farm Cottage, Butterhouse, Lindum Cottage. These listed buildings are characterised by their vernacular architecture, traditional local stone and locations with extensive views of the valley and the site from their upland locations. They derive significance from their setting within the rural valley. The introduction of the new school buildings and the associated playing fields, etc, will be highly visible and have an urbanising effect on the valley. I acknowledge that previously the views included the industrial former loomworks complex. However, this incorporated local stone and architecture of some merit, in addition to its historical associations. I consider the impact of the proposal will be negative.

The impact on the views of and from Hollin Greave Farmhouse will consequently have an impact on the setting of the Holly Grove conservation area to which it belongs. Whilst some buildings within this area do not benefit from the wide ranging views of the valley, the views of the conservation area from Diggle will be affected by the introduction of the new school and the

playing fields. These will have a detrimental impact on the significance of the conservation area and I do not consider will enhance or preserve the significance of the area.

There is also an impact on views of and from 25; 45-49 Huddersfield Road; and Ambrose Cottage. These listed buildings are located on the valley floor and Ambrose Cottage is on the hillside overlooking the valley. At present, the green belt and adjacent views towards the Grade II listed office building and canal form an important element to the setting of these buildings. Again, their significance will be compromised by the urbanisation and increased development within the valley.

Conclusion

I consider the proposed new school is intrusive and lacking in architectural interest and it would cause harm to the setting of the Grade II listed office building to WH Shaws, and the canal and associated listed structures to the rear. As such, I do not support the proposal.

I also consider the proposed new school and associated works would be of detriment to the setting of the remainder of listed buildings and the conservation area noted above.

Nevertheless, I have not considered the public benefits of the proposals in terms of the provision/necessity for a new school. I would suggest my comments are considered with reference to Section 12 of the NPPF and particularly the balancing exercises included within para's 133-135.