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Historic Environment Supplemental Comment: Church View, North Cliffe

Addressing the reason for refusal given in application ref 23/01877/PLF

1.1 The recent planning application for erection of a replacement dwelling following demolition of existing dwelling was refused (application reference 23/01877/PLF).

1.2 The refusal was partly based on the design and size of the dwelling, which was stated to not respect the character of its surroundings: *'It is considered that the proposal would result in demonstrable **harm to the character of the local area** insofar as **it fails to respect the scale and design of other dwellings within the local area and due to its significant scale, bulk and mass adversely impacts on the locale.**'* The reason given for refusal was in full:

1. *Policy S4 of the East Riding Local Plan supports replacement dwellings where proposals respect the intrinsic character of their surroundings. Paragraph 4.41 sets out that replacement dwellings will be permitted in the countryside where their design and character reflects the surrounding area and results in an increase of the useable floor area normally by no more than 50%.*

Policy ENV1 of the East Riding Local Plan requires all proposals to have regard to the specific characteristics of the sites wider context and the character of the surrounding area, and have an appropriate scale, massing, and height.

The NPPF seeks to ensure development is sympathetic to local character. The NDG encourages development that understands and relates well to the site, its local and wider contexts and patterns of housing. Policy ENV1 of the ERLP SD seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to safeguarding the character and appearance of the area and states that proposals will be supported where they achieve a high quality of design.

The proposal is for a significantly larger replacement dwelling which would exceed the 50 per cent increase threshold (74% increase) as outlined in paragraph 4.41 of the East Riding Local Plan.

It is considered that the proposal would result in demonstrable harm to the character of the local area insofar as it fails to respect the scale and design of other dwellings within the local area and due to its significant scale, bulk and mass adversely impacts on the locale.

The proposal therefore fails to comply with Policy ENV1 of the East Riding Local Plan Strategy Document which seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to safeguarding and respecting the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, it would be contrary to paragraph 130 (c) of the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character. It also fails to comply with Policies C1 and I1 of the National Design Guide which support development which understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context and respond to existing character and identity.



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In making this decision the Council has followed the requirements in paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.3 During the application process, the applicants engaged positively with the planning authority and their conservation team, who initially objected to the proposal. Following redesign of the proposed replacement dwelling and a reduction in its proposed scale, the planning authority's conservation team commented favourably, withdrawing their earlier objection *'We therefore no longer have concerns about the proposals... There is therefore no longer an objection to the application.'*

1.4 The final comment of the conservation team reads in full (emphasis added):

'The applicant seeks consent to demolish Church View in North Cliffe, and to erect a replacement four-bedroom dwelling. They also propose to convert a range of historic outbuildings at the front of the site to provide garaging.

In our previous letter we did not raise concerns about the proposed demolition of the existing building, nor the principle of erecting a replacement dwelling. However, we were concerned about the scale of the proposed new house, and its monolithic design. This is because the site is located opposite the Church of St. John, a listed building which garners an important element of its significance from its setting and prominence in the streetscene. This prominence is established in a large part from the fact that it is set across the road from the rest of the built form in North Cliffe, something that allows the appreciation of both its handsome architecture, and its important social and spiritual status. These elements contribute importantly to its special architectural and historic interest respectively.

It is positive that the applicant has taken on board the concerns raised by the conservation team. The revised design now takes more of its architectural cues from the existing built form in North Cliffe, and better breaks up its massing. The result is a building that, while still large, is less imposing, incongruous, or competing. As a result, it now reads at a similar form and scale to an older row of houses to the north of the site. While this is perhaps still larger than would ideally be desirable, it would not be jarring or strikingly out of place. This would allow it to avoid pulling focus from the church, thereby also avoiding the previously distracting impact this would have had on its special historic and architectural interest. We therefore no longer have concerns about the proposals.

Conclusions

*The proposals would therefore no longer continue to be contrary to paragraphs 189 and 199 of the NPPF, or to section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. **There is therefore no longer an objection to the application.***

However, if you are minded to approve the application, we recommend that conditions are attached requiring the following to be attached to any approval:

- 1) *Samples of proposed external materials*
- 2) *Detailed drawings showing the proposed windows and doors in section and elevation at a scale between 1:1 and 1:20 at A3*



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- 3) *Detailed plan showing the proposed new hard and soft landscaping strategy.*
- 4) *Details of the proposed works to convert the retained outbuilding, including sectional details, repair schedules, repair specifications, structural reports and replacement materials as appropriate.'*

1.5 The applicants also commissioned a Heritage Statement and Supplementary Heritage Statement (issued following the re-design) from Humble Heritage Ltd. Following analysis of the relationship between the site of the proposed house and the listed church, and comparison of the size and design of the proposed replacement dwelling and the surrounding historic dwellings, these documents concluded that the proposed house was of an appropriate size and design.

1.6 Therefore all of the heritage professionals involved, both the council's advisors and the applicants' advisor, agreed that the proposed dwelling was of an appropriate size and design for its surroundings. This is an unusual occurrence and is, in this case, an example of the positive operation of the planning system where the well-considered advice of the conservation team was positively addressed by the applicants to result in what should have been an acceptable proposal. It is therefore surprising that application was refused due to the design and size of the proposed replacement dwelling.

1.7 It is acknowledged that the reason for refusal was based on *design* rather than *historic environment* considerations. However, this should affect the assessment. Exactly the same analysis is involved, whether it is design or impact on the listed building that is being discussed. The initial objection raised by the conservation team was based on the perception that the design and scale of the proposed dwelling were not in keeping with the other dwellings in the settlement, and would therefore harm the setting of the grade II listed Church of St John. Similarly, the refusal was based on the assessment that the proposed dwelling failed to respect the scale and design of the surrounding buildings, and therefore falls foul of local policies regarding design and paragraph 130 of the NPPF. Exactly the same issues are involved – scale and design compared with the surrounding buildings.

1.8 Following the redesign, the conservation team explicitly acknowledged that the revised proposal would result in a house that *'takes more of its architectural cues from the existing built form'*, that *'breaks up its massing'* and which will be *'less imposing, incongruous, or competing'*. The conservation team noted that *'it now reads at a similar form and scale to an older row of houses to the north of the site'*. It was concluded that the proposed dwelling would *'would not be jarring or strikingly out of place'*.

1.9 I agree with the conservation team's assessment regarding the design and scale of the proposed replacement dwelling. It is perfectly appropriate for its surroundings. The hamlet and agricultural estate of North Cliffe was purchased by the Sheffield umbrella manufacturer Samuel Fox in 1861. By the time of his death in 1887 Fox had rebuilt the settlement, including the grade II listed Church of St John. A number of large, imposing, steep-roofed estate workers' houses in the hamlet, including the three-storey pair adjacent to the application site, were built. He also built the nearby farmhouses in the same style (Manor Farm, Townend Farm and Manor House), which are even larger and more impressive than the estate houses. Fox built the nearby Cliffe Lodge for himself as a shooting box (Pevsner, N and Neave, D 1995 *Yorkshire: York and the East Riding*. Yale University Press, p.627).

1.10 The estate houses (just like the farmhouses in the wider area) that form the nearby surroundings of the application site were deliberately designed to appear large, ornate and imposing, in part



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presumably to provide a suitably impressive approach to Fox's nearby hunting lodge. The semi-detached estate houses are designed to look like single dwellings. They are all tall buildings, with apparent third storeys and are adorned with details like the tall, Tudor-style chimney stacks, steep pitched roofs (sometimes with decorative tilework), forward facing gables and decorated bargeboards with different designs on each group of houses. Some groups of estate houses are more ornate than others, with some described by Niklaus Pevsner as having an 'array' of decorative features (the terrace of four) and others, though still imposing and having decorative features, as being 'less ornate' (the two pairs of semi-detached houses).

1.11 Following the comments of the conservation team, the design of the proposed replacement dwelling was revised to reflect better the level of detailing on the more ornate elements of the estate houses including features like forward facing gable and third storey style windows. As has been discussed above, the conservation team approved the revised design and commented on how well it was influenced by and reflected the surrounding historic estate houses.

1.12 As well as revising the design, the revised proposed dwelling was slightly smaller and the conservation team agreed that its mass was more broken up by the design. However it should be stressed that the existing dwellings in the village are not characterised by their small size. The estate houses built by Fox are large, with three apparent storeys and high roofs. Even the more recent red brick semi-detached houses are double-fronted, with additional large extensions to either side. The proposed dwelling is not large in comparison. Compared with its surroundings, the existing dwelling at the application site appears small, mean and humble. Contrary to the reason for refusal the scale mass and bulk of the proposed replacement respects its surrounding well and will cause no adverse impact.

1.13 The design and size of the proposed dwelling are therefore in line with local and national planning policy. As per Policy S4 of the East Riding Local Plan, the design and character of the proposed dwelling respects the intrinsic character of its surroundings. As per Policy ENV1 the proposed dwelling has regard for its wider context and has an appropriate scale, massing and height. It safeguards the character and appearance of the area and has a high quality of design. As per paragraph 130 (c) of the National Planning Policy Framework the proposed replacement dwelling will be sympathetic to local character. Crucially, the planning authority's own conservation team agree on all of these points and there is thus no case to refuse the application on grounds of design and size.

Experience

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) recognises Humble Heritage as a professional Historic Environment Service Provider. I and my colleague Liz Humble (MA Cantab., MA Distinction, IHBC, MCIfA) have between us over 40 years combined professional post-qualification experience, during which time we have prepared a large number of heritage reports as part of the documentation required for planning permission, listed building consent and so forth. Liz is a full professional member of both the IHBC and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).

23rd November 2023

Dave Pinnock BA hons., MA (Landscape Archaeology)

Director

Humble Heritage Ltd.