

ADDENDUM

Item No: 5.2

Application No:	15/01172/FUL	Author	Jane Tuck
Date valid:	30 July 2015	:	
Target decision date:	29 October 2015	☎:	0191 643 6331
		Ward:	Tynemouth

Application type: full planning application

Location: Coleman N E Ltd Walker Place North Shields Tyne And Wear NE30 1JD

Proposal: Development of 27no. apartments along with associated vehicle parking and landscaping (amended plans)

Applicant: P North Developments Ltd, C/o RMT Accountants Gosforth Park Avenue Newcastle Upon Tyne NE12 8EG

Agent: Alston Murphy Associates, FAO Iain Murphy 41A Groat Market Newcastle Upon Tyne Tyne And Wear NE1 1UG

RECOMMENDATION: Minded to refuse appeal in progress

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Comments from Historic England

Historic England's statutory remit is the impact the proposal will have on the significance of the Fish Quay Conservation Area. The site is also within the setting of a number of grade II listed buildings.

Summary

Set into the banks of the mouth of the River Tyne, the settlement around the fish quay in North Shields has over the course of its history been a strategic defence point, a navigational aid and the home of a burgeoning fishing industry. The site that is the subject of this application commands an elevated and prominent location, framing a principal entry point into the conservation area and marking an important character transition from industrial at the base of the banks to residential at the top. The proposal to build a large apartment block on this site will have a harmful impact on the significance of the conservation area due to its visual impact, the effect it will have on our ability to read the topography and character of this part of the conservation area, and because it doesn't take account of the historic or extant development pattern. The proposal doesn't meet the requirements of paragraphs 132, 134 and 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework as, in terms of the historic environment, the harm is not outweighed by any benefits and the opportunity to enhance the significance of the conservation area has not been taken; consequently, I cannot support the application in its current form and recommend it is withdrawn or else refused.

In order to move things forward, I would be happy to discuss the contents of a development brief for the site and provide comments on any forthcoming proposals.

Detailed Advice

Significance of the Conservation Area and Site

Set into the banks of the mouth of the River Tyne, the settlement around the fish quay in North Shields has a history that stretches back at least to the 13th century. Over time it has been a strategic point in the defence of the river mouth, a guiding light helping those who needed to navigate the river, and the home of a resourceful group of people who turned trade restrictions imposed on them by Newcastle into a burgeoning fishing industry. By the 19th century industrial development was well established along the riverside, whilst at the top of the banks, where the topography starts to plateau, a residential quarter had taken root, taking advantage of the fine views it afforded of the river. The site that is the subject of this application sits at a point of transition between the two, having had historically a residential terrace to the northern part of the site and industrial buildings further down the slope. It commands an elevated and prominent position within the conservation area and importantly it frames the key entry point along Brewhouse Bank, marking the descent into the heart of the conservation area.

Impact on Significance

The proposal is for a large, flat-roofed, linear block orientated diagonally across the site with a height of predominantly of 4 and 5 storeys. This form of building at this point in the conservation area is contrary to its context:

The large footprint and height references the character of industrial buildings further down the bank rather than the character of the residential buildings which it is visually and historically part of. The height will obscure the finer grain, domestic scale and varied roofline of the houses behind it and punctuate the skyline with a continuous form that is at odds with their character. This affects our ability to read the landscape and the distinct character areas that have been defined by it, and masks the defining characteristic of this site which is as that transitional point from residential to the commercial and industrial focal point of the conservation area.

The orientation of the building doesn't reflect the historic development pattern of the site or take the opportunity to better define the existing street pattern by positively and actively addressing the street frontages. This layout also results in awkward and uninviting leftover garden space, separated from the views of the river and sat in the shadow of the building.

It is difficult to see how the design reflects local character. In particular, whilst I understand the desire to make the most of the views toward the river, the extensive use of projecting glass balconies draws the eye and is an incongruous detail when considered in its historic context.

The photomontages are useful when considering the visual impact, but they don't take account of more far reaching views such as from Clifford Street and the waterfront from which the site is prominently visible. Considering the current single storey building and roof tops of the residential behind are visible, a larger building on this site is likely to have a notable impact on the skyline.

The proposal will, therefore, have a harmful impact on the significance of the conservation area due to its visual impact, the effect it will have on our ability to read the topography and character of this part of the conservation area, and because it doesn't take account of the historic or extant development pattern.

Statute and Policy

When considering any proposal that affects a conservation area, a local planning authority must pay special regard to the desirability of 'preserving or enhancing the character or appearance' of that area (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reflects this by making the conservation of the historic environment, good design and place making fundamental to sustainable development (para.7 & 17). Achieving sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the environment (para.9) including, in the case of heritage assets, requiring local planning authorities to look for opportunities to enhance or better reveal their significance (para.137). Compliance with both the statutory consideration and the NPPF policies can only be achieved by seeking to enhance the character and appearance of a conservation area.

The NPPF goes on to state that harm of any level requires clear and convincing justification, with great weight being given to the conservation of the heritage asset in question (para.132). When harm has been identified, as is the case here, it needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (para.134). In terms of the historic environment, there are no benefits to this scheme that outweigh the harm that will be caused.

At a local level, a huge amount of work has gone into understanding the significance of the area. This has informed management and design documents, adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents, to help ensure that the special interest of the area is protected and that new development enhances the historic environment and, where possible, adds to the character and interest of the area. The potential impact of development on this site was also highlighted in the Heritage Assessments of Potential Development Sites document in support of North Tyneside's draft local plan 2015. When considering this proposal in light of these documents it is clear that there are several aspects that are contrary to the design approach envisaged for new development in the area.

Historic England's Position

This site offers a good opportunity to help reinvigorate this part of the conservation area, and a building that sets the tone at this key entry point is needed in order to establish and add to the area's strong character. The loss of the existing building will not be harmful to the significance of the conservation area and redeveloping the site with a residential use is acceptable in principle, but the proposal does not take advantage of the opportunity this creates to enhance the area and, moreover, would be harmful to its significance; consequently, the proposal doesn't meet national or local policy and guidance and I cannot support it in its current form. A development brief that sets out these constraints and opportunities in more detail would help inform any future proposals, and I would be happy to discuss what form this might take and provide comments on any other proposals for the site to move things forward.