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Authority: North York Moors National Park Authority

Type of consultation: Planning Application

At land at: NYM/2019/0628/FL Land to Rear of Brookfield, Maltongate, Thornton-le-Dale

Type of response: Objection

Date of Submission: 24th September 2020

All responses or queries relating to this submission should be directed to the Secretary for the Trustees at the contact details shown above on this frontispiece.

Please note, CPRE has undergone a national rebrand and whilst the charity, ethos and motivation remains the same – CPRE will now be known as ‘CPRE – The Countryside Charity’

All CPRE North Yorkshire comments are prepared by the charity using professional planners whose research and recommendations form the basis of this response in line with national CPRE policies.

External planning consultant used in this response:



1 Voyage Ltd.
Beth Davies,
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Response to Heritage Assessment produced by WSP on behalf of the applicant

I recognise that officers from the Authority have previously worked collaboratively with the applicant to try and produce an acceptable scheme for the site. These officers do not have the time to fully research the heritage significance of sites though and this burden must fall on the applicant. The applicant has never produced a satisfactory Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) that satisfies best practice. All its pre-application advice is caveated with the acknowledgement that advice offered does not provide any guarantee of the outcome of an application. As such the Authority should have no qualms about refusing the proposal based on information that has come to light within the HIAs submitted by the objectors.

Please note the following specific points in relation to the additional information:

Para 1.1.1 states that the proposed dwellings are 'in the style of an agricultural group'. This statement shows a lack of understanding for the local vernacular. It is clear that buildings associated with the function of the farm were historically arranged around a courtyard to the north of the site. Two outlying buildings of the footprint and orientation proposed are not typical of buildings found on farms with a courtyard plan. Indeed, I have been unable to find any example of this form within the Houses of the North York Moors.

Para 2.1.3 states that the site has been 'cleared of vegetation and buildings'. This is a misleading statement that implies there is a precedent on the site for development or that the site is bare soil devoid of any amenity value. None of the historic maps show any structures on this site and it has been shown by neighbours that the use of the site in association with the storage of materials pertaining to the building trade was unauthorised and terminated by the Authority. The site is vegetated and contributes to both the green, rural setting of nearby listed buildings and the historic character of the Conservation Area.

Para. 2.1.4 suggests that for the site to have heritage value it must contain a historic structure. This shows a lack of understanding of heritage significance. It has been demonstrated by more than one objector that the application site is an historic open space that forms part of the historic, rural character of Thornton-le-Dale and aids our understanding of the agricultural function of the associated listed farmhouse. The degradation of other parts of this historic landscape, such as nearby burgage plots, only serve to make this surviving element more valuable due to its rarity.

Para 3.1.2 accepts that the significance of the Conservation Area is in part derived from its picturesque qualities. The verdant, undeveloped nature of the application site contributes to this picturesque character. This para. also confirms that the character of Maltongate and the area around the beck is partly defined by the presence of former, historic farms. This supports the objectors' assertion that development of historic parcels of farmland, associated with such farms will erode the character of the Conservation Area.

Para 3.1.6 admits that vegetation within the site helps 'screen' modern development beyond which shows acceptance that views of modern development from Maltongate undermine the character of the Conservation Area. The proposed development represents further encroachment of modern development of the type the applicant's heritage specialist states is desirable to screen. The photo below demonstrates that the 'hedge' is not a permanent feature and if removed or heavily pruned would not act as a sufficient screen. The proposed dwellings will be located on raised ground which will exacerbate their impact. They would create a solid mass that would block existing views of the sky that contribute to the open character of the site. The Planning Authority has no control over whether the hedge is maintained and indeed it is likely that future occupants will prune boundary hedging to maximise light into and views out of the site.



Fig 1 Copyright Google Maps. View into site from Maltongate taken in 2016

Para 3.1.7 again refers to the site as ‘cleared’ which is a further cynical attempt to undermine the amenity and heritage value of this historically undeveloped site. It tries to assert that the site makes a ‘neutral combination’ to the character of the Conservation Area. The historic mapping evidences that this is simply not the case and both the CPRE and CBA have demonstrated that the site does have heritage value that contributes to the significance of several listed buildings, the Conservation Area and a non-designated heritage asset. This para does however confirm that the character of the Conservation Area is largely defined by eighteenth century cottages which the proposed development clearly is not.

Para 3.1.8 suggests that the proposal is ‘historically appropriate’ form of development. Again, I have never seen outlying barns in an in-village farm setting that contain large expanses of glazing, roof lights and such large footprints when compared to the host farmhouse and its historic farmyard. The applicant tries to suggest that the dwellings will help conceal 1970’s development beyond but Drawing 07 shows that this will not be the case and the photo at Fig 1 shows that the 1970s development is visually, relatively recessive due to its distance from Maltongate. Drawing 07, however, helps demonstrate that the dwelling will dwarf the adjacent, listed farmhouse. For all the reasons above the proposal will not conform with any ‘historic typology’ as asserted by the applicant.

Para. 3.1.9 argues that the proposal will not affect any public views. This assertion is just blatantly false. The elevated topography, sheer mass and solidity of the dwellings and large expanses of glazing which will lead to light pollution at night will all be evident from Maltongate, from elevated views into the site from listed buildings on the east side of Maltongate and from views into the site from the adjacent footpath. The proposal will also be visible from within the mediate setting of the listed building which itself will be undermined. In terms of impact on the Conservation Area, appeal findings have also established that a development does not have to be visible from a public space in order to detract from its character. This is especially true when historic, open spaces might be lost.

Para.s 3.1.12 and 3.1.13 show a total lack of understanding of how the heritage value of setting is defined and how this then contributes to the significance of a heritage asset. Visibility from a heritage asset is not the defining benchmark for whether development affects setting and therefore significance. The applicant’s report makes no reference to historic mapping, the historic function of the application site or its relationship to the listed farmhouse and wider village or the experiential qualities of the site and how these factors contribute to our understanding and appreciation of any of the relevant heritage assets. The document fails to comply with any established best practice or heritage guidance in this regard.

Para.s 3.1.14 - 3.1.32 all assert that the proposed development will not impact on the settings of any other listed buildings because a) the dwellings will read as converted outbuildings associated with Brookfield and b) they will be screened from view by vegetation. I have demonstrated above that due to reasons of location beyond the historic farmyard, gable width, excessive scale and mass, extensive areas of glazing which are not a vernacular

feature, rooflights, height above the farmhouse, domestic paraphernalia and domestic activity that the dwellings will not read as converted outbuildings. I have also demonstrated that the raised topography and forward positioning when compared to the 1970s development beyond will combine with mass and extensive glazing to make the dwellings visually assertive within the streetscape when compared to existing development beyond. Screening by vegetation cannot be considered as the Authority has little control over how this is managed in the future.

Regardless of the above, the physical development of an historically open site associated with farming whose use would have been contemporaneous with the listed buildings and which has remained undeveloped throughout the lifetimes of these listed structures would constitute harm to setting and therefore to heritage significance.

Para 4.1.13 refers to the site as 'left over space'. This phrase is a negative way of acknowledging that the site is a surviving relic of an historic landscape that contributes towards our understanding and appreciation of the significance of numerous heritage assets. There are numerous examples of sites that are undeveloped but which contain significant heritage value from historic parkland surrounding stately homes, relic landscapes such as burgage plots and historic orchards to village greens. This para argues that the dwellings have a carefully considered vernacular design and yet their proportions and architectural detailing bear little resemblance to vernacular buildings within the Conservation Area.

Para 4.1.14 argues that the proposal is fully compliant with all relevant heritage legislation and Chapter 16 of the NPPF. I would strongly disagree.

Para.s 4.1.15 – 4.1.37 For all of the reasons listed above I would also strongly assert that the proposal is not in accordance with the Authority's Local Plan

Para 5.1.1 The applicant seems to suggest that 'doing no harm' is confined to doing no harm to historic fabric. Harm to the setting of heritage assets and direct harm to the heritage value of land contained within a Conservation Area results in harm to heritage significance. Consequently, I find that the proposal will lead to harm.

Para 5.1.2 This analysis has omitted reference to historic mapping and has resulted in a scheme which develops an historically open site with dwellings which contain non-vernacular glazing and are of a scale that is inappropriate for the scale and topography of the site. The value of this analysis is therefore questionable.

Para 5.1.3 The scheme will not ameliorate the impact of existing modern development which is relatively visually recessive, in large part due to the green, open space across which it is viewed. The proposal will exacerbate the impact of modern development by adding to it, projecting further forward and undermining the tranquil nature of the site.

Para 5.1.4 There may be many converted outbuildings within the Conservation Area but these were existing historic structures of historic proportions and with vernacular detailing which formed part of an historic landscape. Their conversion has not necessitated the loss of an historically important open site which contributes to heritage significance. Even if the site did not form part of an historic, relic landscape, the scale of the dwellings and their elevated position would combine to dwarf the adjacent listed building and the substantial, glazed openings would undermine the timeless, rural, vernacular character of the Conservation Area.

Para.s 5.1.5 – 5.1.6 I strongly disagree that this application is based on a thorough understanding of the heritage significance of the site or that the proposal complies with relevant legislation, policy and guidance and as such would recommend refusal.