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The Ironworks Haverhill

Supporting Statement

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Iain Smith has a post Graduate Diploma in Town and Country Planning and has been actively involved in the planning field for 23 years, initially specialising in environmental aspects of development and since 1989 specialising in all aspects of the historic environment. He is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and has been a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation since its foundation in 1997. Prior to that he was a member of the Association of Conservation Officers.

He has been working in local government since 1982 and has had experience in all aspects of local authority planning including development control and development plan preparation. He was conservation officer for Daventry District Council from 1989 until 2004, being responsible for listed building control and the control of development in conservation areas as well as conservation area designation and assessment. This post also included advising the council on other conservation issues such as tree preservation, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and the protection of hedgerows.

Since 2004 he has been the heritage and design manager at Cotswold District Council responsible for the largest concentration of listed buildings and conservation areas in any single district in the UK as well as all of the design issues in an extensive AONB.

Iain Smith has been operating as a sole practitioner since 2002 in addition to his other work. In this role he has advised on a wide variety of developments affecting the historic environment including large redevelopment sites in urban areas, the protection of conservation areas from damaging development and the alteration of listed buildings. As well as specialist advice he also provides a general planning service and has recently been involved in issues relating to lawful use certificates, new build developments and obtaining detailed planning permission for a new farmhouse.

1.0 Introduction

1.1

This report is prepared to support the application for the redevelopment of The Ironworks Hamlet Road Haverhill. The Ironworks are situated in the Hamlet Road conservation area and as a result, any redevelopment would need to take account the requirements of section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In the absence of a formal conservation area assessment prepared and adopted by the District Council, this report will seek to establish the context for The Ironworks, its place in the conservation area, and the impact on that conservation area of the proposed development.

1.2

This report has been prepared following an initial design stage in which a brief conservation assessment was made of the site and its potential for development.

2.0 Historical Context

2.1

The history of settlement in the area of Haverhill dates back to the Roman occupation of Britain. This development was supplanted by the establishment of a Saxon settlement with its beginnings at the Burton End side of the town. By the time of the Doomesday Book, Haverhill was mentioned by name and was recorded as having one of the only 11 markets in Suffolk. By the end of the 13th century the centre of the town had shifted to its current location and the church in the town centre was established. The earlier church at Burton End was maintained until the mid 16th century when it was demolished, permanently shifting the focus of the town.

2.2

Even by the middle ages, weaving was an important industry in Haverhill, though it appears not to have benefited the town as much as some neighbouring areas that prospered in the later mediaeval wool era. However Haverhill was an important trading centre with a significant market. The town continued to prosper and Anne of Cleves was granted land in the town on her divorce from Henry VIII.

2.3

The great fire of Haverhill in the 1660's destroyed much of the old town. Part of the town was at that time in the county of Essex and that part seems to have survived, but the town centre and bulk of the town were destroyed. The rebuilding of the town was poor and many people abandoned the area. This appears to have set Haverhill on the course that lead to its present appearance and character.

2.4

The town appears to have struggled on into the eighteenth century when weaving became the principal industry. The site of The Ironworks was reputedly a Tannery in the 1770's. In 1784 Gurteens became the major industry in the town and it is the expansion of this company with its factories and workers' housing particularly that constructed the 19th century that gave Haverhill its historic context.



19th century terraced housing

2.5

In 1811 silk weaving as an industry, arrived in Haverhill and in 1819 Gurteens began the manufacture of clothing rather than simply producing cloth. In 1828 the tannery yard was sold to a Spitalfields silk weaver and The Silk Mill was established as the first silk mill in Haverhill. Silk weaving continued on this site until 1882 when Attertons bought the site for an engineering works. However it is notable that silk weaving returned to the mill in 1889.



Haverhill 1889

2.6

Hand weaving in Haverhill was hit hard by the cotton boom in Lancashire in the mid 19th century and although the last hand looms did not disappear until 1920, the cottage industry was all but wiped out leaving the larger industrial enterprises as the main urban employment, further cementing the importance of Gurteens, The Silk Mill and other local industries.

2.7

It was the introduction of the new steam mill and the arrival of the railways that guaranteed the relative prosperity of Haverhill from the mid 19th century into the early 20th century.

2.8

In 1875 Attertons moved to Haverhill but not to the current site which they only acquired in 1882. In the 1890's Eden Road, Duddery Road and much of the terraced housing was built as part of the towns Victorian expansion and in common with this era the town's civic leaders tidied up the town with kerbing and other civic amenities. In 1896 all of Haverhill was included in the county of Suffolk ending 900 years of a town in two counties.

2.9

The town continued to prosper into the 20th century, however much of the Hamlet Road ironworks was destroyed by fire in 1904.

2.10

The interwar depression caused Haverhill to decline and development in this period was slow. The Second World War saw a further stagnation and by the mid 1940's Haverhill was in strong decline. The Suffolk plan of the period however envisaged a brighter future for the town and a strong period of development began in the late 1940s that is still continuing today despite the loss of the railways and the delays in improving the local road network.



Haverhill 1925

2.11

Whilst Haverhill has a varied and, at times, colourful history it is important to note that each period of its development has left its physical reminders and it is possible to trace the history of the town through its surviving buildings and spaces. The designation of conservation areas by the District Council seeks to recognise this and preserve or enhance that history and the local scene it has created.

3.0 The Hamlet Road Conservation Area

3.1

This conservation area is one of two separate conservation areas in Haverhill. The Atterton and Ellis works, on the old tannery site, at the end of Hamlet Road, are situated within it. A comparison of the 1889 and the 1925 plan with that of the conservation area clearly shows the concentration of the designation on the town as it was in the early 20th century. It is interesting to note that the 1889 plan indicates the existence of the terraced streets at the top of the conservation area but shows the limits of the town towards The Silk Mill on Hamlet Road which is shown standing on its own next to Manor Farm. The 1925 plan shows the engineering works as it is seen today.

3.2

Whilst concentrating on this part of the historic core of the town, the conservation area inevitably includes some new development and the area is further hemmed in by later 20th century developments that have been part of the post war expansion of the town.



The Silk Mill

3.3

To the north end of the conservation area the terraced housing, small shop units and the large Victorian church give a very urban feel to the conservation area. The terraced housing and the church are associated with the expansion of the Gurteens works in the later half of the 19th century and the several phases of development in this area can clearly be seen in the different style of the houses. It is important to note that there are some later post war developments in this part of the conservation area that, although being recognisably different, still retain the basic terraced form.

3.4

Amongst the terrace streets there are also the remnants of industry at the top end of Duddery Street. There is a small brick industrial building as well as a works yard with timber clad buildings which has a very run down appearance. This site however is characteristic of the history of the town in the way that industry was associated with residential areas in the 19th and early 20th centuries.



Run down industrial yard

3.5

Once past the red brick Victorian church with its early 20th century rear extension the conservation area becomes limited to the immediate environs of Hamlet Road. The uneven boundary excludes much of the later infill fronting the road but

encompasses the 19th and early 20th century housing along with the remaining examples of houses of earlier periods.

3.6

The 1889 and 1925 maps clearly show the nature of this area before the post war development period. Hamlet Road was underdeveloped and had more the feel of a village street with its isolated houses and farms and the way in which the countryside came up to the road, with the major anachronism being initially The Silk Mill at the end, followed by the engineering works.

3.7

Modern developments have seriously eroded the semi rural feel of this site that prevailed in the early 20th century, but the conservation area boundary does reflect closely this original character. The housing in this part of the conservation area also reflects, as would be expected, this earlier character. The houses are more diverse in nature and age. The size of the buildings varies as does the size of the plots they occupy. There is no regularity about the development in the conservation area; a character only broken to any extent by the housing to the south east of the Australia Arms public house.



Housing south east of the Australian Arms

3.8

The conservation area in this part of Hamlet Road is dominated by the works and The Silk Mill which present a solid industrial quality to the conservation area and gives a justification for the presence of the public house and its associated houses to be developed this far away from the main centre and focus of the town.

3.9

The conservation area is terminated by the railway embankment and its bridge over the road.

3.10

There are a number of listed buildings in the conservation area, all of which are situated along the main Hamlet Road axis. These buildings represent the few survivals of Haverhill before the mid 19th century such as Anne of Cleeves House, The Vale, the fine Georgian house next to The Silk Mill and the more notable developments of the Victorian era such as the church. These listed buildings are key to a full understanding of the conservation area but there are other buildings that also have a place in the character of the area that, although not listed, are perhaps fundamental to its character.



Anne of Cleeves House

3.11

The Silk Mill and Manor Farm are perhaps the buildings that most represent the history of this area that are not listed. Whilst many of the other buildings in the conservation area are subject to an article 4 direction, there have been many changes over the years, particularly with windows, doors and in some cases, cladding that have robbed the area of some of its distinctiveness.



Manor Farm

3.12

The Ironworks site is prominent. It represents a part of the history of the town, being originally the tannery in the later 18th century. Its buildings are distinctly industrial, as is its layout, and the site overall is a distinctive element in the character of the conservation area.

4.0 The Proposed Development

4.1

The proposal envisages the redevelopment of The Ironworks site by the demolition of the majority of the existing buildings and their replacement with buildings designed to reflect the industrial form of the site whilst allowing residential use.

4.2

This style of development reflects that style which has taken place at the old Manor Farm site where the part of the site in the conservation area has been developed with a large industrial semi-agricultural style of building that is designed to reflect the previous buildings on the site which by close examination would appear to be large agricultural buildings.

5.0 Justification

5.1

A conservation area is defined as an area of special architectural or historic interest, it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The purpose of the designation is to recognise the quality and interest of an area rather than that of its individual buildings.

5.2

Planning Policy Guidance note 15 states;

4.2 It is the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings, which should be the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. There has been increasing recognition in recent years that our experience of a historic area depends on much more than the quality of individual buildings - on the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on a particular 'mix' of uses; on characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; on the quality of advertisements, shop fronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of spaces between buildings. Conservation area designation should be seen as the means of recognising the importance of all these factors and of ensuring that conservation policy addresses the quality of townscape in its broadest sense as well as the protection of individual buildings.

5.3

Whilst conservation areas recognise special interest in an area they are not designed to prevent all development. The exercise of planning functions in conservation areas should be about the positive management of change rather than a means to prevent all development. There will still be the need to preserve or enhance conservation areas but this should not be a means of preventing new development.

5.4

PPG 15 states:

4.16 Many conservation areas include the commercial centres of the towns and villages of which they form part. While conservation (whether by preservation or enhancement) of their character or appearance must be a major consideration, this cannot realistically take the form of preventing all new development: the emphasis will generally need to be on controlled and positive management of change. Policies will need to be designed to allow the area to remain alive and prosperous, and to avoid unnecessarily detailed controls over businesses and householders, but at the same time to ensure that any new development accords with the area's special architectural and historic interest.

5.5

The Ironworks site at Haverhill has its own distinct place in the conservation area. Historically, the site has always been an industrial location and today it clearly demonstrates two distinct ages of industrial occupation. The site comprises two separate elements; firstly The Silk Mill and its adjacent listed building and secondly the late 19th early 20th century ironworks itself.

5.6

Whilst the listed building and its adjacent silk mill are capable of conversion and repair, the buildings in the ironworks section do not lend themselves to conversion for a variety of reasons. The brick office and workshop buildings fronting the site, whilst being domestic in scale, have been the subject of significant extension and alteration that has rendered them incapable of conversion. The timber clad

workshop, due to its long term use as a workshop, is not suitable for conversion without the considerable replacement of its fabric. It is these two buildings that have the most visual impact on the conservation area and give the site much of its visual character. Other buildings on site include the flat roofed, two storey building, which is a relatively modern addition to the site as well as the workshops to the rear of the site, which, again by their nature and use, are unsuitable for conversion.

5.7

As already stated this area has historically been an industrial site since the late 18th century. Its form and layout give it a distinct industrial character, as do the overall form and shape of the buildings on the site. In converting the use of the site to residential, the proposed design seeks to maintain that visual distinctiveness and industrial character. It is proposed that the office and workshop buildings are replaced by new buildings which will be carefully detailed to reflect the character of those being replaced as well as following a similar footprint. Given the new build nature of the units it is possible to create more useable domestic spaces than would be available by conversion. The choice of a style of building verging on pastiche for this element of the development has been a conscious choice, but, whilst the overall style reflects the site's history and layout, the new buildings show a domestic nature indicating the change of use of the site overall.

5.8

The replacement for the timber framed building is more closely modelled on its predecessor. The timber cladding and tall, full height windows closely reflect the style of the original structure and give a distinctly industrial feel and appearance to the front of the site.

5.9

This industrial scale and theme to the building design is reflected in the rest of the development on the remainder of The Ironworks site. The proposed site layout is also closely related to the existing building pattern of the site. The intention is to reflect the industrial character and history of this site in its redevelopment.

5.10

The history of the site and its location, within the conservation area, give it an importance in the understanding of the history of the town. It has a distinct and important place in the town and as a result any redevelopment will need to reflect that character, which is an important element in the conservation area. This proposed development seeks to reflect that history and character whilst creating new buildings that are suitable for their desired use.

5.11

As already stated The Silk Mill and the listed building (Hamlet House) are included in this development, with the latter to be restored as part of the development and bought back into use as a house. The Silk Mill adjacent, which is adjacent to the listed building, is capable of conversion and as a result it is proposed to convert the former into three dwellings. This conversion will be contained within the existing historic fabric therefore maintaining the historical integrity of the site.

5.12

Hamlet House, as a listed building, has its own importance; however The Silk Mill pre dates The Ironworks and by its location, size, and representation of the town's history, is clearly a key building in the conservation area.

5.13

The demolition of The Ironworks buildings raises the issue of whether or not they are key buildings with respect to the conservation area. It is clear that the site layout and industrial nature are a fundamental element in the conservation area and this would tend to indicate some significance for the site's buildings. Most of the buildings on site post date 1904 when a serious fire destroyed much of the works and as a result the buildings are relatively modern. The brick buildings fronting the site date from the late 19th century, however they have been subject to significant alteration to the rear which means that in places the building is not whole.

5.14

In determining applications for the demolition of buildings in conservation areas there are two tests these are set out clearly in paragraph 4.27 of PPG 15 which states;

4.27 The general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. The Secretary of State expects that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings (paragraphs 3.16-3.19 above). In less clear-cut cases - for instance, where a building makes little or no such contribution - the local planning authority will need to have full information about what is proposed for the site after demolition. Consent for demolition should not be given unless there are acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment. It has been held that the decision-maker is entitled to consider the merits of any proposed development in determining whether consent should be given for the demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area.

The two tests are exclusive in that in the case of key buildings; ie those that make a positive contribution, the test is harder than for those buildings whose contribution is less clear cut. With the latter the test is essentially - what is to replace the buildings and does it satisfy the requirements of section 72 of the principal Act?

5.15

What is clear from the Guidance note however is that the decision maker is entitled to consider the merits of any development proposed, in making a decision on the demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas.

5.16

The tests to be applied for key buildings are tough in that they are designed to ensure the preservation of listed buildings. However these tests do allow for the condition of a building to be a determining factor in the process. Those buildings on site that might be termed to make a positive contribution to the conservation area are the brick buildings and the grey timber clad workshop. The brick buildings are

not whole, having been heavily modified and extended and the timber clad building is not capable of conversion.

5.17

Taking into account the ability of the decision maker to consider the merits of the proposed development it is considered that the test that should apply to the demolition concerns the quality of the proposed development, which in this case has been designed to reflect the character of the site as it stands today and give some representation to its history by reflecting in the building design the industrial history of the site.

5.18

The principle test, as required for all developments in conservation areas, is whether it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area. This proposal carefully reflects the site character and gives proper consideration to its history and place in the conservation area. The building design reflects the local styles and the styles of the buildings on site without being a pure pastiche. Therefore this development would not detract from the character of the conservation area.

5.19

Outside of the immediate Ironworks, the development proposes a new build block to the north of the site. This area of land appears to have been open farmland up until the late 20th century. It may well have been part of Manor Farm but has now become part of the town itself. As a small piece of land, remnant of a larger field now lost under the adjacent new road, it has no real context. The neighbouring open land has been recently developed, which has further eroded any significance this element of the site has. This is not an important open space in the conservation area and as a result it is proposed to develop this site with a style of building similar to that built adjacent to Manor Farm. With the proximity of this site to The Ironworks, rather than to the farmhouse, it has been possible to have a less simple form to the building reflecting the vernacular of both the agricultural history of the site and the history of the neighbouring ironworks. The site this building stands on has no real context, it is of no significance as open space and the neighbouring

development adjacent to Manor Farm has completely taken away its spatial relationship with the latter. With respect to the conservation area this is a site that could accommodate development, it is best described as a gap site and as a result the test for development is the quality of the architecture. In looking at this site against the test laid out in section 72 of the Planning(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the development of will have no negative impact on the character of the conservation area and therefore it will enhance it. The detailed design of the new build has respected the local vernacular styles and the historical elements of the land and the adjacent sites and does create an interesting building that, in its own right, will add to the quality of the conservation area.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1

This report sets out the importance of The Ironworks site to the character of the Hamlet Road conservation area and shows how this has been incorporated and addressed in the development of the proposal.

6.2

The proposed development recognises the industrial nature of the site, its layout and its history, and reflects these elements in the way the buildings are designed and set out. The choice of materials for the buildings and the way they interact on site all reflect the history and nature of this site today. As a result this proposal will not have any adverse impact on the character of the conservation area.