
2024/0929

Barnsley MBC

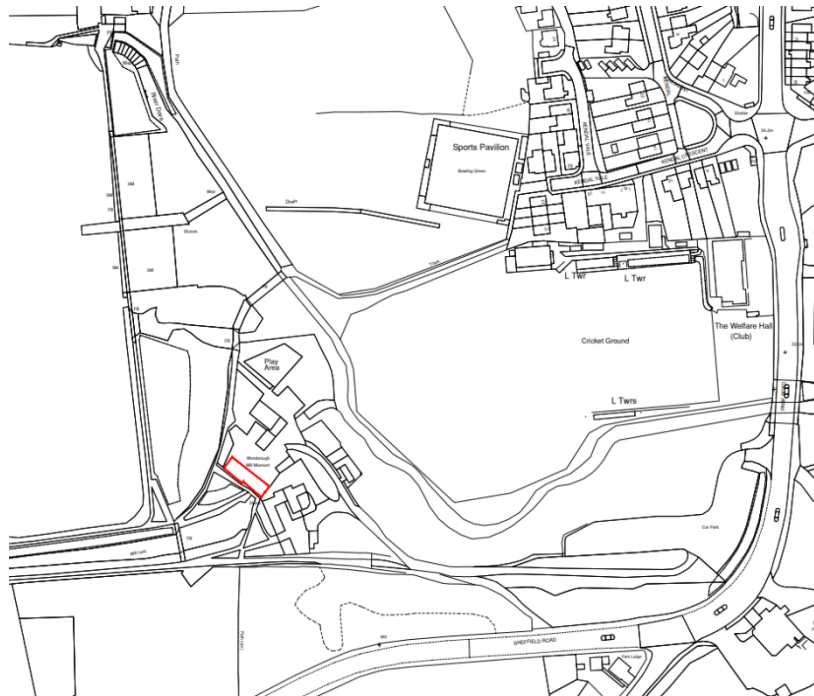
Worsbrough Mill, Park Road, Worsbrough, Barnsley, S70 5LJ

Alterations to listed building to improve wheelchair accessibility including installation of flooring and replacement of ramps and handrails as well as associated works such as adjustment of the barriers near to the waterwheel and the installation of a moveable barrier/gate (Listed Building Consent).

This application is being brought before members as it has been made by the Council.

Site Description

The application relates to the Worsbrough Mill Museum, which is located within Worsbrough Country Park, off Park Road, approximately 3km to the south of Barnsley Town Centre. The site comprises a water powered corn mill constructed circa 1625 and a later 19th century engine mill, set in over 200 acres of Country Park including a 60-acre reservoir built in 1804. The two main buildings on site are grade II* and grade II-listed and are constructed from deeply coursed dressed sandstone with stone slate and Welsh Slate roofs.



Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the current development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise; the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The Local Plan was adopted in January 2019 and is accompanied by seven masterplan frameworks which apply to the largest site allocations (housing, employment, and mixed-use sites). In addition, the Council has adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans which provide supporting guidance and specific local policies which are a material consideration in the decision-making process.

The Local Plan review was approved at a full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering on its objectives. This means, no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review, which is due to take place in 2027, or earlier, if circumstances require it.

Local Plan Allocation – Green Belt

The site is located in the Green Belt and the Mill is a grade II*- listed building. Therefore, the following policies are relevant:

- **Policy SD1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development.**
- **Policy GB1: Protection of Green Belt.**
- **Policy GB2: Replacement, extension and alteration of existing buildings in the Green Belt.**
- **Policy D1: High quality design and place making.**
- **Policy HE1: The Historic Environment.**
- **Policy HE3: Developments affecting Historic Buildings.**
- **Policy GD1: General Development.**
- **Policy POLL1: Pollution Control and Protection.**
- **Policy BIO1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.**
- **Policy T4: New Development and Transport Safety.**

Supplementary Planning Document(s)

- **Heritage impact statements.**

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. The core of this is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Proposals that align with the Local Plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In respect of this application, relevant policies include:

- **Section 12: Achieving well-designed places.**
- **Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land.**

Paragraph 153. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 154. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a) *buildings for agriculture and forestry;*

- b) *the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) *the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) *limited infilling in villages;*
- f) *limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- g) *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.*
- h) *Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:*
 - i. *mineral extraction;*
 - ii. *engineering operations;*
 - iii. *local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
 - iv. *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*
 - v. *material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
 - vi. *development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.*

– **Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.**

Paragraph 219. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- **Section 16: Decision on application.**
- **Section 66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions.**

Consultations

Historic England	In this case we are not offering advice. We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers.
Conservation Officer	No objections.
Public Rights of Way (PROW)	It is recommended that an informative is added to the decision notice.

Local Ward Councillors	No responses.
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Representations

A site notice was placed nearby, expiring 06th December 2024. A press notice was used, expiring 06th December 2024. No representations have been received.

Assessment

Principle of Development and Green Belt Impact

The application site is located in the Green Belt.

Local Plan Policy GB1 restricts development in the Green Belt that is considered to be inappropriate unless very special circumstances are presented. Exceptions to this are set out in the NPPF.

Local Plan Policy GB2 relates to the replacement, extension and alteration of existing buildings in the Green Belt. The extension or alteration of a building where the total size of the proposed and previous extensions does not exceed the size of the original building is acceptable in principle if cumulatively, the development would not amount to more than a doubling of the size of the original building.

In this instance, the proposed works would be carried out internally and would not impact on the size of the original building. Purely internal alterations are lawful pursuant to section 55(2)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and therefore do not require planning permission. However, as the proposed works would affect a listed building, listed building consent is required in accordance with the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The proposed development is therefore considered to be an appropriate form of development in Green Belt policy terms and is acceptable in principle. The proposed development would not have a harmful impact on the appearance or character and would preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Worsbrough Country Park is recognised as having biodiversity and geological value. The application site is located within the Country Park. The proposed development would be carried out internally. Purely internal alterations are lawful pursuant to section 55(2)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and therefore do not require planning permission. As this is an application for listed building consent and is not accompanied by an application for planning permission, as it is not required, the proposal would be exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Development comprising alterations to a listed building are acceptable in principle if the development would conserve and enhance the significance and setting of the borough's heritage assets and would pay particular attention to the elements which contribute most to the borough's distinctive character and sense of place.

Design, Heritage and Visual Amenity

Sections 16 (2), 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building and conservation area or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The application building is the grade II*-listed Worsbrough Mill. The milling operations of the building have been paused temporarily due to the need for some essential repair works. A planning statement states that there are three issues with an existing access ramp within Worsbrough Mill which was installed during the building's restoration programme in the early 1970s. These issues include steps at either side of the ramp, a narrow width and a steep gradient that is not compliant with Building Regulations, a limited clearance above the southern end of the ramp which poses a hazard, and the ramp is fixed above a set of millstones which restricts access for maintenance works. The proposal

has been discussed with the Council's Conservation Officer and follows their recommendations to consult Architects and a Structural Engineer. The existing ramp would be removed with the void below its southern end covered with floorboards to improve space for maintenance. A replacement ramp would be installed providing level wheelchair access. The ramp and handrails would comprise of removable sections that would enable stones to be raised and maintenance to be carried out more easily. Other works to facilitate the development would include the repositioning of existing stone furniture and chain housing.

The Council's Conservation Officer was consulted on this application and their comments set out that the existing access ramps are of low significance as it is neither historic fabric, nor a re-creation of previous structures. The access ramps are however vital in allowing access, close inspection, and visitor understanding of the mill machinery and how this has been integral to the story of the building. The proposal would improve the gradient and would remove steps further improving access. The proposal would also provide a resolution for issues regarding incorrect spacing of balustrades and provides a demountable solution (in sections) when the mill is working. The proposed works to the ramp raise no issues due to the entirely modern fabric. Beneath the southern end of the ramp, an infilled floor section would be installed, constructed of oak joists and floorboards and supported by existing structural timbers. Some minor reinforcement to the timber beams will be required, however no additional structural members will be installed. Some minor modifications would be made to the mill chain housing to ensure an adequate width along the ramp. The Conservation Officer considers that on balance, the proposal would improve accessibility which will enhance the understanding and enjoyment of this grade II*-listed building and therefore they see no harm. This weighs significantly in favour of the proposal.

The proposal is therefore considered to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the grade II-listed building in accordance with Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The proposal is also considered to comply with Local Plan Policy HE1: The Historic Environment, Local Plan Policy HE3: Developments affecting Historic Buildings and Local Plan Policy D1: High Quality Design and Placemaking and would be acceptable regarding visual amenity.*

Planning Balance and Conclusion

The key considerations of this application are the impact on the historic environment, specifically the grade II*-listed Worsbrough Mill.

The proposed development is considered to be necessary to address existing issues with access ramps in the Worsbrough Mill. The proposed development would provide a replacement ramp with an adequate gradient, width and clearance, and level wheelchair access. The replacement ramp would be made of removable sections that would enable improved access for maintenance. Whilst the proposed replacement ramp would be a modern structure and intervention, it would replace existing structures which are themselves modern. As such, only modest weight has been afforded in this regard. Significant weight has however been afforded to the anticipated benefits of the scheme which would include improved access for visitors and maintenance, allowing milling operations to continue and providing an environment that would enhance the understanding and enjoyment of this grade II*-listed building. The planning balance is therefore tilted in favour and the proposal should be treated favourably, in accordance with paragraph 219 of the NPPF. As such, this application is recommended for approval.

**Recommendation -
Approve with Conditions**