



Appendix – Conservation & Heritage Advisory Committee, 13 Jan 2022

Haslam's Foundry site, City Road, Derby

Summary

This is a consultation on a pre-application enquiry submitted on behalf of Derby City Council's Strategic Housing team, to seek the views of the Conservation & Heritage Advisory Committee on proposals to redevelop the former Haslam's Foundry (Aida Engineering) site on City Road, Derby.

It is proposed to retain and conserve the Victorian façade of the foundry, including the glazing and the angled return to the north (facing the car park), while removing the more modern industrial buildings on site to allow construction of 74 new council homes – a mixture of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments, and 2, 3 and 4 bedroom townhouses, all of which will be elevated above the level of a severe flood event.

This is not a fully finished design, but it is at a suitable stage to seek feedback from stakeholders such as CHAC. We also plan to make use of the Council's Design Review Panel. This document aims to introduce the site and the proposals to members of the Committee. A full Heritage Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment will be submitted alongside the planning application.

We are indebted to the recent book *Sir Alfred Haslam: Marine Refrigeration Pioneer Derby*, by Geoff Sadler and Joan D'Arcy, which supplied much of the historical information.



Site history

Derby City Council purchased the site from Aida S.r.l. in 2018. At that time, the main buildings had been derelict for at least fourteen years and had fallen into considerable disrepair. The prime driver for the purchase was the need to gain control of the site to construct a new flood defence, as part of the Our City Our River programme. The flood defence was constructed in 2019-20, with roughly half the original site area being given over to a landscaped flood conveyance corridor. In 2020 the Council appointed WYG (now Tetra Tech) to design and progress a residential scheme for the remaining "landward" site.

The site includes what remains of Sir Alfred Seale Haslam's Union Foundry, including part of the main foundry building which dates to 1876 (extended 1891). At its height, this was a far more substantial complex, extending further south along City Road, and as far back as the river bank.

The foundry served a number of sectors over the years under different owners, most recently metal forming and stamping for automotive manufacturers. Perhaps most significant, though, was the manufacture of the first refrigeration units to be installed on board ships, which allowed fresh produce to be shipped around the globe, with a transformative impact on people's diet in the industrialised countries. This is a significant part of Derby's manufacturing history, and it is appropriate that it should be recorded and interpreted within the redevelopment.

Most of the Victorian buildings are believed to have been progressively cleared through the 20th century, with the current vehicular access being created in the early 1990s to serve a large new industrial shed, and what was the City Road Business Park (now itself demolished to make way for the flood defence).



Heritage assets

None of the structures on site are listed, but the site lies in the Little Chester Conservation Area and the World Heritage Site Buffer Zone. It is also in close proximity to the Roman Hypocaust Scheduled Monument, and to the Grade II listed Handyside Bridge.

The foundry has particular importance to the Little Chester Conservation Area, as Haslam was responsible for developing many of the surrounding terraced houses for his workforce, for supplying the workers' institute and reading rooms on the corner of St Paul's Road (now offices), and for contributing the south aisle of St Paul's Church.

Although the site lies outside the World Heritage Site and is of a later period to most of the Derwent Valley Mills (being primarily steam-powered rather than water-powered), it is clearly an interesting former industrial site within the Buffer Zone, situated near the important riverside path from the Silk Mill up to Darley Abbey.

Flood risk

The recently upgraded flood defences protect the Chester Green area to a better than a 1-in-100-year level of protection (i.e. protection against a flood with a 1% chance of occurring in any given year). However, higher peak river flows can be expected as climate change continues, and therefore we need to plan for a scenario in which even the new defences are overtopped. All homes on site are therefore elevated above the level of the design flood – by a nominal 1.5m above ground level in the case of the townhouses that need to address the retained windows on City Road, and by a whole storey for all the other homes on site.

A Flood Management & Evacuation Plan has been drafted, which sets out how Derby Homes and the Council will evacuate the site following a flood warning (a minimum 24 hours warning is expected, and probably several days), and how anyone who refuses to evacuate will be kept safe. Providing connections between the buildings above the flood level is a key part of this, so that any residents who remain can support each other, and nobody is isolated in their own property. This would also assist the emergency services.

Failure or breach of the flood defence, which is formed of welded sheet piles, is considered extremely unlikely, but nevertheless it is planned that the lower structure of each building is of reinforced concrete, to deal with the forces released in that scenario.

Consideration given to converting the existing building

Clearly, any development should start by considering whether the existing buildings could be reused and adapted.

The 1990s building is an industrial shed, with no real potential for residential use.

It is important to understand that what remains of the 19th century foundry building is in fact little more than the fabric that is proposed for conservation (the northern and eastern elevations). Its southern elevation is of 1990s construction, built to close off the end when the original office building was removed, and to link it to the new building. The western elevation is largely absent, due to the wide openings that have been formed into the new building. Its roof is formed of 20th century asbestos cement sheets, which are in poor condition and require removal. So there is no viable original building here to convert.



Coupled with the requirement to elevate homes above the flood level, while also addressing the levels of the existing windows, it is proposed that a sympathetic new build that incorporates the historic fabric is the best option, and that this will contribute positively to the character of the Conservation Area.

Housing need

Members will be aware that Derby, like most cities, has a very significant need for new affordable housing, and the proposed mix of accommodation will meet the needs of a range of applicants on our Housing Register. It will also make efficient use of a brownfield site in contributing to the overall housing requirement set out in our Local Plan.

Although the development is a council project, it is possible that different tenures may be involved, and some houses may be sold on a shared ownership basis. This is subject to further appraisal work and discussion with partners.

Consultation with community

For the past two years, we have been in regular contact with the Planning Sub-Group of the Darley Neighbourhood Board, which includes the ward councillors and local residents. We have shared plans from the concept stage and sought feedback. This feedback has been instrumental in shaping the proposals, for instance, in including larger family homes as well as apartments, and respecting the existing height levels on site.

The site is not a “blank canvas” – the technical constraints are such that an open “co-creation” approach is not really possible here. However we wish to be as open as possible about the proposals, and we are planning wider public engagement in early 2022 before the planning application is submitted, both online and in-person (subject to any Covid restrictions).

Proposals – apartments

Facing the river are three blocks of apartments. These are predominantly one bedroom (as that is where the bulk of the demand from our Housing Register is), with some two bedroom flats. The blocks are low rise, with the central B (see Appendix 3 pp. 12-17) and southern C (pp. 18-21) blocks being comparable in height to the current steel shed, at effectively four stories, and the northern A block (pp. 9-11) one storey lower, in order to reduce the massing around this prominent corner and to relate better to the northern return of the retained wall.

Unlike the current building on site, the separation of the blocks avoids a single monolithic mass dominating the view from the river corridor and the listed bridge, and instead creates visual interest with views in and out of the development.



The blocks are linked by podium decks at first floor level, which provide outdoor amenity space, but also serve to link the site from north to south in event of a flood (see above). Access would normally be restricted to residents only. It is planned that the decks would be biophilic, with opportunities for planting to soften the line of the flood defence wall. Most of the flats also benefit from either private balconies or terrace areas on the podium decks, so that people can make the most of views over the river corridor.

Undercroft parking, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and secure cycle stores are provided at ground floor level, largely below the blocks and decks, with appropriately sized trees planted between the blocks. Over time these will grow to provide a green outlook at first floor level, which will be visible from the river corridor, further softening views of the site.

Flat roofs with brick parapets would be used largely to site air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels, possibly with green roof elements, subject to funding.

An option is shown to reflect some of the names associated with the site in naming the blocks, with large scale signage in the style of the painted wall advertising that was common in Victorian times – feedback on this option would be welcomed.

Proposals – southern houses

To the south of the apartments are two short terraces of houses. Those in the southwestern corner are four bedroom houses, which again benefit from views over the flood wall (Appendix 3 pp. 22-23). Those along the southern boundary are two and three bedroom houses (pp. 24-25), which step down the scale of the development towards the two and three storey properties on Etruria Gardens. This terrace presents quite a traditional gable end to City Road, while the projecting elements of the front elevations create a rhythm that references the arched factory façade.

All of these houses have car ports at ground floor, with space to store cycles, bins, and garden equipment. Back doors at first floor level lead onto a small deck area, with steps down to the garden. Trees along the boundary will be retained if possible.



Proposals – houses against façade

Relating new homes to the windows of the retained façade has been one of the most challenging aspects of the design. The window cills sit at around head height, making it awkward to create a usable space such as a garage with residential floors above.

We have looked at various options, including separating the houses from the wall and leaving it free-standing in front (it is structurally stable due to the concrete columns of the internal crane gantry). This was rejected as it seemed to make the wall into a relic of the past, rather than an integral part of the development, and with no clear ownership it may have been vulnerable to vandalism.





We also considered building the houses right onto the wall and turning it into their eastern elevation. However, this would have created houses with no level access and no front doors to the street, while restricting the house layouts around either two or three bays of fixed width, and placing living rooms at head height above the public pavement. There were also technical concerns about building a modern thermal envelope onto a solid brick 19th century structure, effectively limiting its ability to “breathe” and making it inaccessible for maintenance in the event of any problems.

The proposal is to separate the houses from the wall by a nominal 2 metres, to create a raised access walkway just below the cill level of the windows, and to add a glazed roof covering, effectively creating a covered arcade onto which the front doors of the new terraced houses will open.

By separating the houses from the wall, we no longer need to have a 1:1 relationship with the existing windows, and the houses benefit from more ambient light entering through the glazed roof strip. By closely matching the height and the pitch of the roofline, we can also better respect the outline of the existing building, while creating visual interest when viewed from Chester Green. A sensitively designed lighting scheme could make this an attractive elevation, particularly at night, that draws the eye in, rather than the existing wall shutting off the new homes from the surrounding area.

The 11 houses in this terrace (Appendix 3 pp. 26-27) are elevated approximately 1.5m above ground level, which is sufficient for flood purposes. Level access to the front doors is via a ramp at the northern end of the arcade, which will be gated to give access to residents and their visitors only. The rear doors open onto a raised deck, from where there is a short flight of steps down to the private garden and driveway parking, with EV charge point.

Proposals – commercial units

From an early stage we have considered how we can use the ground floor space for anything other than just parking. We have also considered how the new development can be integrated into the existing community, given that it physically sits between two high walls.

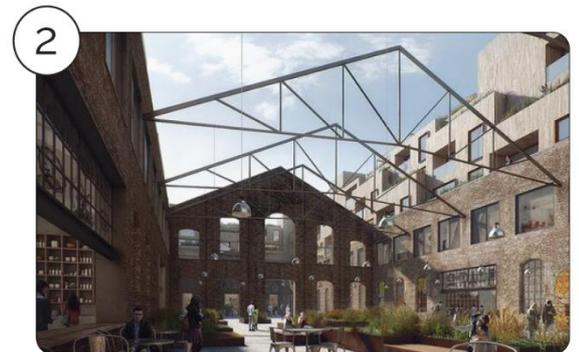
Introducing appropriate commercial uses is an opportunity to bring people through those walls, and offer small businesses space in an attractive location that gets a lot of pedestrian traffic. This would be subject to planning and to more detailed financial appraisal.

For planning purposes, we show three commercial units in the ground floor of block A, with frontage onto the car park, where they will be visible to people using the footpath towards the river. Some changes to the pedestrian access to the car park would be necessary for this. The easternmost unit is envisaged as a café/coffee shop, with external seating area, which can also be accessed by pedestrians through the arch in the foundry wall (this arch would not be gated).



The acute angle formed by the retained wall at this end of the site is very challenging to build inside, with the need to relate floor levels to the existing windows and obtain sufficient daylight into very deep floorplans. Therefore it is proposed that this is an open area, with planting and interpretation of the heritage of the site. Some of the steel roof trusses and structural columns could be retained here, to reflect the former layout of the main foundry building. The bricked-up windows to the northern elevation would be reopened and appropriately screened. One option could be a mural on the inside of the retained wall.

We have taken commercial advice which suggests there would be strong demand from a range of independent businesses for the remaining units, such as potentially florists, hairdressers, specialist retail, creative industries workspace, or a small-scale office to support the “hybrid” office/home working model. The Council would select tenants carefully to ensure these uses were compatible with the residential above them.



Nydalen Building Transformation, Norway

Choice of materials

The construction of these buildings may not be completely traditional, due to the need for a highly resilient ground floor structure, and to meet the Future Homes Standard. Upper floors may be steel or timber framed, may use structural insulated panels or traditional masonry. Whichever option is selected, it is proposed that brick is the primary facing material.

While the aim is to respect and add to the character of the Conservation Area, it has also been important to create a clear distinction between the retained Victorian fabric and the new rather than to imitate it. Therefore no attempt has been made to match the colour and patterning of the existing brickwork.

It is proposed to use a blend of three complementary brick shades (refer to brick blend sheet), intermixing them in different proportions to create an “ochre” effect, with a robust, solid, partly industrial feel at ground level, gradually lightening as the eye travels higher up the wall. For the elevations facing the river, this would include the flood wall, which is planned to be overlaid as part of the development of the site.

In addition, various contemporary detailing techniques are used to break up the brick elevations and create texture and visual interest. These include panels of vertical stack bond, and sections of horizontal and vertical ribbing.