

I'm a qualified Heritage Professional from the Berwick area, working for the last 15yrs as Historic Buildings Inspector for Historic Scotland's Listing Team.

Berwick needs an updated hospital but this application doesn't accurately convey the new building's scale or detrimental effect on the Conservation Area. The 19th century H-Plan Infirmary should not be demolished to make way for it.

The well-detailed, stone-built 1872 Infirmary was designed to be seen from all sides. 18 buildings by the same architect are listed in Scotland (including 2 hospitals). All the original building survives and the H-plan is key to understanding its historic function. Its south elevation is very prominent from the Town Walls (Scheduled Monument).

Historic England's consultation response doesn't acknowledge the merit of the whole Infirmary building, or recognise its contribution to the Conservation Area and social history of Berwick healthcare.

Although un-designated, it is in fact very rare: it is the only standing C19th H-plan Infirmary in Northumberland and the eastern Borders.

The NPPF(2) requires '*any irreplaceable non-designated heritage asset be conserved in a manner appropriate to its significance*'. The proposed demolition goes against this and causes substantial harm.

- The H-plan is key to the historic function and the Bell Tower would be less readable without it. Drawings don't illustrate adequate repair of its scarred elevation.
- Landscape plans show access ramps in its position. These ramps should be rerouted and do not justify demolition of this important Heritage Asset.
- Removing small later additions from the H-plan would allow the whole infirmary building to be sustainably repurposed incorporating modern design. A complete building would be viable for numerous future uses. Its location next to Castlegate carpark would suit a Tourist Information Centre, restaurant or creche.
- The C19th Infirmary makes an invaluable contribution to Berwick which has lost too many of its historic buildings. Further unnecessary demolition as part of this application is short-sighted and unjustifiable.

Political and time pressure to provide a new facility should not result in granting demolition consent without detailed understanding of the historic setting. I request councillors undertake a site visit to fully appreciate the importance of this irreplaceable building before any decisions are taken.