

APPLICATION REPORT - PA/342430/18

Planning Committee,

Registration Date: 01/11/2018
Ward: Royton South

Application Reference: PA/342430/18
Type of Application: Full Planning Permission

Proposal: 1) Demolition of existing two storey rear extension. 2) New single storey rear extension, entrance canopy, ramp and step access to rear. 3) Internal alterations, including relocation of library into Town Hall and change of use of existing library to a commercial unit (use classes A1-A5). 4) External alterations and landscaping works.

Location: Royton Town Hall and Royton Library, Rochdale Road, Royton, OL2 6QJ

Case Officer: Graham Dickman

Applicant Agent : Oldham Council
WYG

THE SITE

This application relates to two, adjoining, landmark buildings in Royton Town Centre - Royton Town Hall and Royton Library. The buildings are located on the east side of Rochdale Road opposite the main pedestrianised shopping centre. Immediately to the south an ornate stone archway separates the Town Hall from single storey retail premises, with a further pedestrianised walkway separating the Library from retail units to the north. There is a public square to the rear which also fronts onto modern buildings comprising Royton Leisure Centre and Royton Health and Wellbeing Centre.

Neither building is statutorily listed or within a conservation area, however, they represent important heritage buildings within the townscape.

The Town Hall was constructed in 1880 and is two storey, brick faced with prominent stone detailing and dominated by a centre clock tower with a copper cupola. The building is presently partly occupied by the Council's District Team and Police Community Support Officers, although much of the building is vacant. The Library was opened to the public in 1907 and is designed in a similar style to the Town Hall. It is predominantly single storey, but with accommodation also available within the roof space. The ramp serving the Library entrance is a prominent feature of the front elevation.

Both buildings include substantial modern, flat roof, two storey additions to the rear constructed in the 1960s/70s, and extensive basement areas.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposals have been formulated in order to secure the long-term maintenance and practical use of these heritage buildings, including the relocation of the library into the Town

Hall and the change of use of the existing library to a commercial unit. This would cover a range of potential uses, including retail, financial and professional services offices, cafes/restaurant, drinking establishments, and hot food takeaways (Use classes A1-A5).

External alterations to the building will be focussed on the rear elevation and include the removal of the unsympathetic rear additions. These will be replaced by a much narrower addition to the rear of the Town Hall compared to the existing structures to create sufficient floor space to accommodate the relocation of the library. The depth of the rear extension will be reduced from 15m to 6.5m, beyond which will be a canopy covering a level platform, with steps and an access ramp provided towards the renovated public square. This section of the extension will be faced in a glazed curtain wall with metal louvres and glazed sliding doors into the building.

Following the removal of the modern addition to the rear of the Library, a new facade will be created. Originally it was intended that this section would be overclad with copper cladding, however, following further discussions, this has been replaced by brickwork of a matching colour and configuration to the original building. The proposed window openings will be enhanced by the use of buff coloured artstone surroundings and plinth, again reflecting the style of the original structure.

Internally, most of the existing divisions on the ground floor of the Town Hall will be removed in order to open up the space to accommodate the Library facilities. At first floor level, the divisions will remain allowing for various community uses and relocation of the current functions. The only internal works proposed to the Library are the construction of a new service entrance on the northern elevation and partially altering the internal layout to accommodate this and waste storage facilities.

The public square will be reconfigured with a mix of hard and soft landscaping reflecting the existing design.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE:

PA/031799/94 - Construction of new ramp and steps. Approved 11 August 1994

CONSULTATIONS

Highway Engineer	No objections subject to provision of adequate secure cycle storage facilities.
Environmental Health	No objections subject to details of facilities for waste storage and removal.

REPRESENTATIONS

The application has been advertised by site and press notice.

Three letters of objection have been raised on the following grounds:

- Although not attractive, the existing extensions are functional and removal of part of the lettable area would reduce the economic viability of the scheme and employment potential;
- Use of louvres and copper cladding are out of character with the area and will attract vandalism and higher maintenance costs;
- Concerns that entrance to the library is being moved to the rear.

Royton Local History Society - Initially expressed concerns at the external appearance of the addition to the Town Hall. However, following amendments to the design and facing

materials proposed, this objection has been removed.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, to the extent that development plan policies are material to an application for planning permission, the decision must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. This requirement is reiterated in Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In this case the 'development plan' is the Joint Development Plan Document (DPD) which forms part of the Local Development Framework for Oldham. The application site is allocated within a Centre by the Proposals Map associated with the Joint Development Plan Document. Therefore, the following policies are considered relevant:

Policy 1 - Climate change and sustainable development

Policy 2 - Communities

Policy 9 - Local Environment

Policy 15 - Centres

Policy 20 - Design

Policy 24 - Historic Environment

DPD Policy 1 seeks the effective and efficient use of land, prioritising development on previously developed land. Policy 2 supports appropriate development that contributes towards sustainable development which supports the transformation of education and skills, and contributes to improved health and well-being for the people of Oldham. In this context, the proposals will assist in securing the long-term effective use of existing buildings which occupy a highly sustainable town centre location, and in particular allow for the development and future-proofing of the important educational resource provided by the Library.

By making practical use of the underused former Town Hall, the proposals will assist in maintaining a vital public service and securing the physical restoration of the building. In order to achieve this, re-use of the Library building for commercial purposes will allow this part of the building to remain in productive use by means of a range of potential functions which will be appropriate to the town centre location.

DPD Policy 15 recognises the significant contribution that centres such as Royton can make to the borough, acting as focal points for a mix of commercial and social activities, and it is vital to promote and enhance their vitality and viability. Under this Policy, proposals for food, drink, and night-time related uses were required to demonstrate an established need. However, this requirement is not reflected in the NPPF which supersedes the local plan policy, and therefore, such demonstration is not required.

Nevertheless, it is still necessary to show how such uses contribute positively to local environmental quality and visitor experience; do not have an unacceptable environmental impact; contribute to visual appearance, or result in adverse traffic, community safety, or other impacts.

Heritage and Design

Although neither building is statutorily listed or located within a conservation area, they nevertheless contribute strongly to the character of the area, and development should ensure benefit can accrue from the proposals.

DPD Policy 20 promotes high quality design and requires that new development should reflect local characteristics whilst not resulting in a significant adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. Policy 24 states that when determining development proposals, the Council will seek to protect, conserve, and enhance the architectural features, structures, settings, historic character and significance of the borough's heritage assets, including locally significant buildings.

NPPF Paragraph 189 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Paragraph 192 requires Local Planning Authorities to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

NPPF paragraph 197 requires that in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss to the significance of the heritage asset.

With regard to the demolition of the rear extensions, these were added in the 1960s and 1970s, they are utilitarian in appearance, and are considered to be unsympathetic to the designs of the main buildings. It is considered the demolition will improve the visual amenity of the area and reveal more of the existing buildings' original elevations. This would be a positive impact.

The proposed extension to the Town Hall will be a single storey in height and will allow for more of the rear elevation of the building to be visible from the public space. The brickwork used will be of a similar colour and palette to those utilised on the original town Hall building. The use of louvres will create a more contemporary feel providing a focus to the new entrance whilst not overpowering the main Town Hall features and scale. The rear wall of the library building will be re-clad in brick of a similar colour and dimensions to those used on the main library building. The stonework which will frame the windows and form the plinth will also be of a similar buff colour to what is currently used. Taking into consideration the visual impact of the existing extension, these changes will have a positive impact.

An existing external flue to the rear of the Town Hall will require replacement. A condition is recommended to ensure this is painted in an appropriate colour to reflect the existing brickwork and reduce its visual impact.

In regard to the impact on listed buildings or conservation area, the nearest designations are Saint Paul's Church and Conservation Area to the west. Having regard to the separation distance and fact that external alterations are confined to the rear, east, elevation of the building, there will be no impact on statutorily listed heritage assets.

These impacts must also be considered in the context of the positive future public benefits of securing the library's relocation, and improving the functionality of a presently under-utilised Town Hall building. In this regard, it is concluded that the benefits associated with the proposal would outweigh any harm to the heritage asset.

Environmental Impacts

DPD Policy 9 requires that development does not adversely affect the environment or human health caused by air quality, odour, noise, vibration or light pollution, or cause significant harm to the amenity of existing and future occupants through impacts on privacy, safety, security, noise, pollution, visual appearance of an area, access to daylight, and other nuisances.

Traffic Impacts

The site is located in a highly sustainable location within Royton Town Centre with ready access to regular bus services, and with residential areas within close proximity to the site. A condition is recommended to ensure secure cycle parking can be achieved, and on this basis the highways Officer has raised no objections.

Grounds of Objection

In respect of the concerns in relation to design issues, the initial proposal for utilisation of copper cladding on the rear elevation has been acknowledged to be unsympathetic and a more appropriate solution has now been incorporated. The scheme achieves a good balance between aesthetics and practicality, and in this context, the use of modern materials does not undermine the value of the heritage asset as described above.

The proposals will result in some loss of floorspace, however, the scheme seeks to ensure practical use of the available space, and in this context, any loss is not deemed significant in securing long-term viability for the buildings.

The removal of the front entrance to the library has resulted from practical considerations in ensuring re-use can be achieved successfully. Whilst access will be to the rear, this will be onto an enhanced public space which serves other public buildings. This elevation therefore functions as a primary approach to the building and does not lessen the appreciation of the value of the library asset.

Conclusion

The proposals for the Town Hall and Library result from a desire to secure the practical future of the buildings and to preserve a valued public service. In this regard, the scale and design of the physical alterations to the building respect the heritage assets, whilst providing an overall public benefit, which accords with national and local policy guidance. The introduction of commercial use into the former library is an appropriate solution in this important town centre location and will further enhance the buildings. There are no environmental, traffic or other impacts which would result from the proposals, and therefore approval is recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development must be begun not later than the expiry of THREE years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - To comply with the provisions of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby approved shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved plans and specifications received on 27 February 2019 which are referenced as:

A090070-337 S-002 Rev 02 - Proposed Site Block Plan
A090070-337 SE-01 Rev 02 - Proposed Section A-A
A090070-337 EL-07 Rev 02 - Proposed South Elevation
A090070-337 EL-08 Rev 02 - Proposed Rear Elevation
A090070-337 EL-09 Rev 02 - Proposed North Elevation
A090070-337 PL-010 Rev 02 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
A090070-337 PL-011 Rev 02 - Proposed First Floor Plan
A090070-337 PL-012 Rev 02 - Proposed Basement Plan
A090070-337 PL-013 Rev 02 - Proposed Roof Plan
A090070-337 LA1 Rev P1 - Landscape Proposals (received 11 November 2018)

Reason - For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications.

3. No development comprising the construction of any external building works shall take place unless and until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The materials to be used throughout the development shall be consistent in terms of colour, size and texture with the approved samples.

Reason - To ensure that the appearance of the development is acceptable in the interests of the visual amenity of the area within which the site is located.

4. Prior to installation, the replacement external flue to the rear of the Town Hall shall be painted in a colour to reflect the existing brickwork of the building, details of which shall previously have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To ensure the appearance of the development is acceptable in the interests of the visual amenity of the area within which it is located.

5. The use hereby permitted shall not commence unless and until adequate secure cycle storage facilities have been provided in accordance with a detailed scheme which has been previously submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the approved scheme shall always remain available to users of the development.

Reason - To promote sustainable transport alternatives and ensure adequate cycle storage facilities are available to users of the development.



