

Report to CABINET

Old Library Building: Restoration and Refurbishment Phase 2

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Amanda Chadderton,
Leader of the Council and portfolio holder for Regeneration and Housing

Officer Contact:

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Reason for Decision

Following recent community engagement from the Big Conversation about the future of Oldham Town Centre, the feedback provided a very clear steer from local residents with regards to the pride they have about their place and heritage and the importance of maintaining and bringing back into use some of the beautiful heritage buildings.

The Council have already committed to preventing further deterioration of the Old Library Building, and works are underway to make the building safe, compliant, and secure, and provide a usable shell ready for bring back into full use.

Alongside progressing the priority works programme and as part of the Creating a Better Place strategic framework, future use assessments have been undertaken and this report sets out options for the internal redevelopment and delivery, aimed at providing a long-term sustainable future for the building.

Executive Summary

The Old Library building has undergone a series of demolition and strip out works since 2018. There has also been an extensive programme of surveys and investigations and Tilbury Douglas Construction (TDC) are now on site undertaking the restoration and conservation works to the external fabric of the building. These Phase 1 priority works will

address the most significant dilapidation and conservation issues affecting the building and will enable the building to be made safe, weather-tight, and ready for a future internal fit-out.

Recommendations -

As set out in the Part B paper

Old Library building: Restoration and Refurbishment Phase 2**1 Background**

- 1.1 The Old Library building has undergone a series of demolition and strip out works since 2018. There has also been an extensive programme of surveys and investigations and the contractor is now on site undertaking the restoration and conservations works to the external fabric of the building.
- 1.2 In February 2021 a priority works schedule, addressing the most significant conservation issues affecting the Old Library building and capturing the most disruptive structural and fabric interventions required to present the building for a future fit-out phase was approved.
- 1.3 In October 2021, Cabinet member approval was provided to award the priority works contact to Tilbury Douglas Construction. Work started on site in December 2021. The priority works agreed included making the building secure, safe and weather-proof to stop further dilapidations: specifically, a new roof, significant internal structural alterations and an extensive scheme of stone repairs and cleaning to the external envelope of the building.
- 1.4 In May 2022, approval was given to issue a works contract modification to enable additional works to be undertaken (fire escape update, window upgrades, DDA compliance works etc) while the scaffolding and other on-site preliminary measures were in place. This was to help reduce the visible aspect and community concern of removing these features only to reinstate at a later day, in addition to removing the duplicate expense of installation / removal from the overall project budget allocation.
- 1.5 Following recent community engagement from the Big Conversation about the future of Oldham Town Centre, the feedback provided a very clear steer from local residents with regards to the pride they have about their place and heritage and the importance of maintaining and bringing back into use some of the beautiful heritage buildings.
- 1.6 Discussions with local residents during the town centre Big Conversation confirmed that the community want to see the Old Library building brought back into use. However, the key concern for any third party (private sector, community / voluntary group) future use would see escalating costs to make the building safe and secure, and fit for any future purpose, due to the dilapidated state of the building.
- 1.7 Future use assessments have been undertaken aimed at providing a long-term sustainable future for the Old Library building whilst recognizing resident feedback and aligning the Old Library accommodation with the Council's regeneration ambition for the town centre and the Creating a Better Place strategic framework. Therefore, ensuring the best use of public funds, the options considered quickly narrowed the selection of future uses to include public services to help with best value considerations.

1.8 The consideration of rationalizing public services aligns with the town centre vision and the overall asset rationalization of the corporate estate / one public estate in a post-pandemic environment where working patterns, requirements and arrangements have changed, while still embedding civic pride and reflection of heritage into the plans.

2 **Current Position**

2.1 Resident feedback asked for more community space within the Cultural Quarter of the town centre, which includes Oldham Library, Gallery Oldham, and the Old Post Office building, (which is being redeveloped in its own right to provide the future home of the Coliseum via a new performance theatre), and the Old Library building.

2.2 The Old Library building has many heritage features which have been hidden as part of previous uses, which can be incorporated into the plans and re-energise the spaces to reflect and recognize the communities civic pride. This has heavily influenced the review of options for future uses within the building, and by putting civic and public services at the heart while providing a balance of creative, cultural and community uses provides a truly integrated civic function.

2.3 The feasibility option assessment therefore sets out the following parameters for the Old Library accommodation goals:

- Public, community space and meeting rooms on the ground floor
- Enhanced / available space for community groups to collaborate from across arts, culture and performance and who need more space to deliver their activities and services.
- Additional gallery space on the upper floor as there is connecting bridge to the existing Gallery
- Civic space – Council Chamber, mayoral chamber, member rooms, committee meeting rooms and executive office space for officers / support staff.

2.4 The Strategic Business Case (SBC) has been developed to understand the value in utilising baseline future use assessments and this document sets out the procurement and development strategy for the Old Library restoration and refurbishment phase 2. The SBC documentation (appended to the part b paper) sets out:

- What is the rationale for the project, case for change and the business need
- Indicative costs and phasing
- Procurement and delivery strategy
- Financial implications
- Links to corporate strategy/asset management

2.5 The lead consultant will be responsible for the co-ordination of the design of the project and for the appointment, coordination, management, and programming of the activities of the Design Team.

2. A procurement exercise has also been completed for the external project management team, cost consultant and principal designer.

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 Option 1 – proceed to the next stage of project development

- Note the completed Strategic Business Case (SBC) and agree to its approval as the basis of the delivery of the preferred facility mix for the Old Library restoration and refurbishment Phase 2.
- Authorise formal agreement and award of the contract(s) in the configuration set out in this report for the next stage of project development.

3.2 Option 2 – Carry out further accommodation analysis: to undertake further future uses / accommodation analysis it will be necessary to carry out a further review of the Councils accommodation needs and strategic ambitions.

3.2.1 Objectives would need to be re-set and opportunities to drive programme, design and construction efficiencies would not be realized. Project development would-be put-on hold and the outturn cost for re-development of the Old Library would likely increase.

3.2.2 Future uses could span into private / third sector solutions and would result in different options being needed for civic / corporate services. Programme, cost uncertainty, timescales and strategic objectives would be put at risk if this option was to be considered further.

3.3 Option 3 – do not progress phase 2 proposals at this time. By undertaking the external fabric restoration works, the Council will have invested significantly into addressing the deterioration of the condition of the building and it will be possible, on completion of the phase 1 work, to secure the building pending consideration of other options.

3.3.1 As with other listed heritage buildings on Union Street, the local community do not want these buildings to stand empty, especially given the investment committed to-date in ensuring a long-term future.

3.3.2 Maintaining public access and bringing heritage buildings back into use are known priorities and this is a driving factor in consideration of the options available.

3.4 Option 4 dispose of the building following completion of the current phase 1 works: By undertaking the external fabric restoration works, the Council will have invested significantly into the development of a long-term future for the Old Library building.

3.4.1 However, it may not be possible to achieve any interest in the market with a specified and deliverable use without a commitment to invest the further resources

(time and financial) needed to complete a fully occupiable building. It is anticipated that the Council would have to include a significant grant award (£millions) to any potential bidder as part of a disposal package.

- 3.4.2 Concerns and risks are noted that any successful bidder, even with the Council grant award, could take ownership of the building without securing an acceptable end use or timeline for reinvestment. Creating a Better Place strategic objective would be put at risk.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 Option 1 – proceed to the next stage of project development

- 4.2 This option helps bring a heritage building back into use, provides a new civic home for public services, supports an enhanced cultural and community offer and supports the wider strategic asset rationalization / town centre redevelopment plans.

- 4.3 On approval of the recommendations, SBC and capital commitment by Cabinet the design for a cultural and civic hub, underpinning a renewal in the life of the Old Library will be progressed.

- 4.4 A Full Business Case (FBC) will be submitted for technical scrutiny ahead of works starting on site. This should align with the completion of / transition from the dilapidation works and provide one coherent project plan to the local community, with completion targeted for Q4 2023/24 (or accelerated where possible).

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Following recent community engagement from the Big Conversation about the future of Oldham Town Centre, the feedback provided a very clear steer from local residents with regards to the pride they have about their place and heritage and the importance of maintaining and bringing back into use some of the beautiful heritage buildings.

- 5.2 Following Cabinet approval, Ward members will be consulted followed by engagement with third parties, stakeholders, and the wider community as part of the planning application process (as change of use will be required).

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Total costs for the Phase 2 works to the Old Library are detailed in the part b section of this report. The costs will be capital expenditure and will be a charge against the Creating a Better Place Capital Programme which has already been approved by Cabinet as part of the annual budget setting process.

- 6.2 As the Old Library redevelopment proposals are to relocate the Council Chamber, Members' Offices and certain other civic functions from the Civic Centre, the

project is critical to the achievement of a significant proportion of the Creating a Better Place Budget Option relating to reductions in costs upon the vacation of the Civic Centre. (James Postle, Finance Manager)

7 Legal Services Comments

7.1 All works, services and goods or property procured/acquired or disposed of by or on behalf of the Council must be procured in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and all other relevant regulations including, where applicable, the Financial Procedure Rules and Land and Property Protocol. Client Officers must work with legal colleagues to approve the terms of any grant agreement.

7.2 Further details are set out in the part b section of this report. (Rebecca Boyle, Group Solicitor – Corporate Team).

8 Co-operative Agenda

8.1 As a Co-operative Council we are committed to working with our residents and partners to regenerate Oldham Town Centre. During the Big Conversation and Oldham Plan Consultation residents spoke about the importance of celebrating Oldham's proud history, especially the many historically rich buildings around the town centre. The proposed approach reflects this ambition, bringing one of Oldham's most historical buildings back into use. (Jonathan Downs – Corporate Policy Lead)

9 Human Resources Comments

9.1 None identified at this time. (Adele Savage, HR Advisory Operations Manager)

10 Risk Assessments

10.1 Corporate risks are detailed in the part b report. (Mark Stenson Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and Strategic Financial Management)

11 IT Implications

11.1 To ensure the building is fit for its intended use, the Council's IT Service will be engaged as soon as possible. (Mike Zammit, Interim Head of IT)

12 Property Implications

12.1 Property implications are embedded in the body of the report with further detail in the part b report. (Robert Mayo, Interim Development Director)

13 **Procurement Implications**

13.1 Full details are set out in the part b report, and the full procurement strategy is detailed in the Strategic Business Case. (Dan Cheetham, Interim Procurement Lead)

14 **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

14.1 It is essential that any works are completed in compliance with health and safety legislation including The Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015. (Neil Crabtree, Interim Assistant Director – Public Protection)

15 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

15.1 There has been a detailed stage one Equality Impact Assessment completed for the Creating a Better Place programme. Colleagues in Policy have reviewed this document and have given feedback and some suggested additions and elements to explore.

16 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

16.1 Yes, as part of the Creating a Better Place programme

17 **Key Decision**

17.1 Yes

18 **Key Decision Reference**

18.1 ERS-08-22

19 **Background Papers**

19.1 none

20 **Appendices**

None to part a report. Technical documents are appended to the part b report.