

APPLICATION REPORT - FUL/349133/22
Planning Committee – 7th December 2022

Registration Date: 25th May 2022
Ward: Saint Mary's

Application Reference: FUL/349133/22
Type of Application: Full Application

Proposal: Conversion of existing former bank into office space.

Location: Former Natwest Bank, Mumps, Oldham, OL1 3TL

Case Officer: Paula Stebbings
Applicant: Mr Atif Malik
Agent: Mr Philip Lambert

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the application is approved for the reasons set out in this report.

THE SITE

The application relates to the grade II listed National Westminster Bank (official listing name), located in Oldham Town Centre. The building is bound by Wallshaw Place to the North, Mumps to the South and Wallshaw Street to the West.

The former bank was built in 1905, in a flamboyant baroque style, designed by well-known Manchester architects Mills and Murgatroyd. Although the building has been vacant for approximately 10 plus years, due to the quality of materials used, such as marble within the banking hall, the building retains a high level of integrity with many of the original features surviving.

THE PROPOSAL

This application relates to the proposed change of use from the existing former bank to shared/coworking office space. The proposal includes the restoration of the heritage asset whilst retaining the majority of the existing plan form. Specifically, the proposed works to be assessed as part of this application consist of the following:

- Repair and replacement of pitched and flat roof
- Repairs to
 - timber framed windows and potential introduction of 13mm slimline double glazing
 - Exterior doors and surrounds
 - Masonry
 - Lightwells
 - Staircase
 - Timber panelling
 - Lime plaster
 - South east lobby on ground floor

- Replacement of damaged rainwater goods
- Pipework and ducting throughout basement to ventilate space
- Replacement/repair of mosaic tiles
- Replacement/repair of parquet flooring
- Replacement/repair of skirtings
- Secondary glazing to windows
- Removal of partition walls in the basement
- Removal of later single storey rooms in the banking hall
- Introduction of partition walls at first and second floor
- New door openings in first floor corridor
- Cleaning of external stonework

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

LBC/349134/22- Conversion of existing former bank into office space- to be determined at committee

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 16, sets out Governments national planning policies for the conservation of the historic environment.

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, to the extent that development plan policies are material, planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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 located in the town centre boundary by the Proposals Map associated with this document.

The following DPD Policies are relevant:

Policy 1- Climate change and Sustainable Development

Policy 15- Centres

Policy 24 – Historic Environment

CONSULTATIONS

Highways Engineer	No objections subject to a pre commencement condition relating to cycle parking.
Environmental Health	No objections.
Drainage	No objections subject to a pre commencement condition relating to sustainable drainage.

REPRESENTATIONS

The proposal has been advertised by means of individual consultation letters sent to the occupiers of the neighbouring properties, a Press Notice, and a Site Notice being erected adjacent to the site. As a result of the publicity, no representations have been received.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

Policy 1 of the Joint DPD seeks to ensure the effective and efficient use of land and buildings by promoting the reuse and conversion of existing buildings prior to the use of greenfield sites. It also aims to ensure that development respects Oldham's natural, built and historic environments. The proposal is for the reuse of a vacant building and it is considered that the requirements of this policy have been met.

Offices are identified as an appropriate use within the Town Centre and is encouraged in Policy 15, along with paragraph 87 of the NPPF, which states that 'main town centre uses should be located in town centres'. Offices are defined within the Glossary of the NPPF as a main town centre use. The proposal will bring an empty designated heritage asset back into use whilst allowing new local business to be brought into the area. There will also be the additional benefit of creating new jobs and ensuring vitality of this area of the Town Centre. Therefore, the proposal will comply with the aims of the development plan policies, with regards to the principle of development.

Level of Significance

The grade II listed former bank building was constructed in c.1905, which through a series of acquisitions and mergers became the National Westminster Bank. Designed by Mills and Murgatroyd, the building is of High Edwardian baroque style, typical of many public buildings constructed during Edwardian era, with its rusticated ground floor, domed corner tower with spire and exaggerated detailing, including segmental pediments and columns. The building also demonstrates architectural design and detailing typical of mid-19th century / early 20th century banks, including its layout and lavish decoration focused on public frontages and internal spaces.

The scale, flamboyant detailing and landmark quality of this building (due in part to its tower), elevates this building above other bank and commercial buildings in Oldham Town Centre in significance. The building has been altered relatively little since its construction, and retains a high degree of integrity, both externally and internally, in plan form and detailing. The building 's grand interior and exterior design was intended to impress existing and attract potential new customers in Oldham. Near public views of its montage, and near and wider public views, looking out from Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area, of its western end, especially those in which the tower is visible from base to spire, make an important contribution to the building 's setting and significance. Resulting in high evidential and aesthetic values.

The building represents Oldham's wealth during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the area was an international centre for the textile industry, particularly cotton spinning and milling, and associated engineering. The building stood at what was the commercial heart of Oldham in a former premier shopping street. The building has high historical value and given its landmark qualities, is likely to have a medium level of communal value (social) as it is a source of community identity for the historic core of Oldham Town Centre.

Overall, described in the submitted Heritage Statement, the grade II listed former bank is considered to be of high heritage significance.

Impact on the Designated Heritage Asset

In respect to Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Governance and Legal Director of English Heritage ('Legal Developments' Conservation Bulletin Issue 71: Winter 2013) states that the courts have said that these statutory requirements operate as 'a paramount consideration' and 'the first consideration for a decision maker'.

Any decisions relating to listed buildings and their settings must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see above) as well as satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.

The NPPF puts 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development' at its heart and identifies sustaining and enhancing the historic environment as a key element. It sets out a requirement within paragraph 199 to apply 'great weight' to the assets conservation when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset. In paragraph 190(a) it also advises that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

Officers are supportive of the overall scheme however, at this stage, it is considered that further information will be needed, in the form of pre commencement conditions that ensure the submission of condition surveys, schedule of works and method statements to fully understand the extent of repairs and replacement of specific historic elements of the building. Such as roofing, windows, doors, masonry, timber panelling, lime plaster, the southeast ground floor lobby, rainwater goods, mosaic tiles, parquetry flooring and skirting boards.

Care has been given to ensure that the internal alterations to the plan form have minimal impact on any significant elements of the designated heritage asset. The minimal removal of partition walls at basement level, the removal of the later single storey rooms in the banking hall, the introduction of partition walls at first and second floor levels and new door openings in first floor corridor, would allow better access and visibility throughout the building, and ensure a more usable space. Supported by officers.

Externally, there is clear evidence of corrosion, spalling, discolouration and vegetation growth which have impacted upon the historic stonework. A dry brush cleaning approach, to cause as little harm to the historic fabric, is proposed and is considered acceptable.

CONCLUSION

The building is vacant and has been for approximately 10 years, thus resulting in signs of deterioration and the need for a use which will secure its long-term conservation.

The current proposal is to convert the building to shared offices. As part of this proposal the stated intention is to restore the majority of the original layout of the building, repair historic fabric and make alterations which would allow the new use to be accommodated in a building with appropriate environmental controls.

Officers have considered the requirement for clear and convincing justification for any harm or loss to the significance of the heritage assets and consider that further information, in the

form of pre commencement conditions are needed to further understand this extent. However, the overall scheme and initial approach taken by the applicant is considered to not cause any initial concerns to the Conservation Officer.

At this stage of the assessment process, it is considered by the Conservation Officer that the proposals will cause 'less than substantial harm' to the heritage asset. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF states that 'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.' In this instance, it is considered that bringing this building back into full use, resulting in increased accessibility and its long-term preservation would identify as considerable public benefits. The level of intervention and loss, which will be further discussed and identified through pre commencement conditions, is expected to be justified and the design of the new interventions will have an overall positive impact on the grade II listed building. Therefore, subject to the imposition of planning conditions, to allow the further assessment of the detailed information unavailable at this time, the development is considered acceptable in this respect.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Committee resolves to grant permission, 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 Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be fully implemented in accordance with the Approved Details Schedule list on this decision notice.

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 works listed in A - N below for the Grade II Listed former bank building shall be carried out unless and until detailed sections, elevations, condition surveys, schedule of works, method statements, samples and specifications, where applicable for that item, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- A. Roofing;
- B. Windows- proposed and existing including secondary glazing;
- C. Doors - proposed and existing;
- D. Masonry;
- E. Walls- plastering, panelling, tiles, skirtings and finishes;
- F. Ceilings and covings – existing and proposed;
- G. Floors – alterations, finishes, removals;
- H. Staircases - existing and proposed;
- I. Balustrades and handrails;
- J. Mechanical ventilation and Electrical Installations – existing and proposed;
- K. Lightwells;
- L. Rainwater goods;
- M. Damp proofing, tanking and rot treatment; and
- N. Provision of insulation.

Thereafter the development shall not be brought into use until the works have been completed in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason - The Local Planning Authority considers it expedient in order to protect the historic fabric of the listed building and to protect amenity, having regard to Policies 20 and 24 of the Oldham Local Plan.

4. No development shall commence until full details of a scheme for a sustainable drainage system to serve the site, and method of implementation, including maintenance for the lifetime of the development, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timetable. Thereafter the sustainable drainage system shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding both on and off site and ensure satisfactory drainage facilities are provided to serve the site, having regard to Policy 19 of the Oldham Local Plan.

5. The use of the development hereby approved shall not commence until a scheme for the provision of secure cycle parking has been implemented in accordance with details which shall have previously been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved facility shall remain available for users of the development thereafter.

Reason – In order to promote sustainable means of travel having regard to Policies 5 and 9 of the Oldham Local Plan

6. No development shall commence unless and until a site investigation and assessment in relation to the landfill gas risk has been carried out and the consultant's report and recommendations have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Written approval from the Local Planning Authority will be required for any necessary programmed remedial measures and, on receipt of a satisfactory completion report, to discharge the condition.

Reason - In order to protect public safety because the site is located within 250m of a former landfill site, having regard to paragraphs 183 and 184 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Management Plan (CMP) with detailed method statements of construction and risk assessments, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (approval to be in consultation with Transport for Greater Manchester).

The CMP shall include:

- a. safe methods of working adjacent to the public transport interchange, the Metrolink system and bus depot;
- b. provision for the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- c. arrangements for loading, unloading and storage of plant and materials;
- d. details of construction and demolition methods to be used (including the use of cranes);
- e. details of the provision for the erection and maintenance of scaffolding and security hoarding; and,

f. measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, to safeguard the amenities of the locality, and to ensure that the developer agrees safe methods of working to meet the safety requirements of working above and adjacent to the public transport interchange, the Metrolink system and bus depot. Having regard to Policies 5 and 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.

SITE LOCATION PLAN (NOT TO SCALE):

