

APPLICATION REPORT – OUT/354325/25
Planning Committee 2nd July 2025

Registration Date: 9th April 2025
Ward: Coldhurst

Application Reference: OUT/354325/25
Type of Application: Outline

Proposal: Outline planning application comprising the partial demolition of existing buildings, and extension to provide new floorspace (Use Class E and F1) with associated public realm and associated works. All matters reserved for future determination save for primary access.

Location: Manchester Chambers, West Street, Oldham, OL1 1LF

Case Officer: Graham Dickman
Applicant: Muse Places Limited
Agent: Hannah Blunstone

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is presented to Planning Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation as it relates to an application involving the Council as landowner in connection with major schemes for the regeneration of the town centre.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the application is approved subject to the conditions set out at the end of this report.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The application site includes an ornate, three-storey brick building fronting onto Cheapside and Oldham Bus Station. To its rear a covered arcade links to a predominantly two-storey 1990s addition which opens out onto George Square. These buildings include small commercial units at ground floor, albeit only three of which are presently occupied, with office accommodation above.
- 3.2 Attached to the side of the main building is a two-storey, mock-Tudor fronted building with an adjoining single-storey section. This building was formerly used as a public house (Three Crowns) and more recently as a food bank.
- 3.3 The entrance to the Spindles Shopping Centre is located adjacent to the eastern elevation of the building.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal involves the following:
- 4.2 Firstly, the demolition of both the two-storey addition and the linking arcade structure at the rear of Manchester Chambers, along with the former public house.
- 4.3 Secondly, an outline application for the erection of replacement floorspace of up to 1,550 sqm (GIA) for use as either 'Commercial, Business and Service' and/or 'Learning and non-residential institutions' (Use Class E and/or Class F1 respectively).
- 4.4 The submitted Parameter Plans show that the replacement floor space would largely occupy the footprint of the existing structures, with the exception of the single storey section adjoining the former public house. Up to four storeys could be constructed on the site of the public house, with two storeys on the section to the rear of Manchester Chambers.
- 4.5 Thirdly, the incorporation of the area occupied by the section of building which is not to redeveloped into the adjacent open public realm.

5. PLANNING HISTORY

PA/338914/16 - Change of use of building from public house (use class A4) to food bank (use class D1). Approved 22 September 2016

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 6.1 The Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan and related documentation took effect and became part of the statutory development plan on 21 March 2024.
- 6.2 The PfE Plan must now be considered in the determination of planning applications, alongside Oldham's Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (Local Plan), adopted November 2011, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 6.3 The site is designated within the Town Centre on the plan associated with the Local Plan.
- 6.4 As such, the following policies are considered relevant to the determination of this application:

Places for Everyone

Policy JP-S1: Sustainable Development

Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Policy JP-P2: Heritage

Policy JP-P3: Cultural Facilities

Policy JP-P4: New Retail and Leisure Uses in Town Centres

Core Strategy

7. CONSULTATIONS

Highways Officer	No objections in principle
United Utilities	Recommend that any redevelopment is supported by a sustainable drainage scheme.

8. PUBLICITY AND THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

- 8.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, the application has been advertised as a major development by display of a site notice and publication of a press notice.
- 8.2 In response one representation has been received objecting to the loss of the public house.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL

9. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 9.1 Whilst not meeting the criteria for statutory national listing, the main Manchester Chambers building is considered a building which represents a 'non-designated heritage asset'.
- 9.2 NPPF paragraph 216 states that "*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. 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 and the significance of the heritage asset*".
- 9.3 The proposal involves the removal of later additions to the main Manchester Chambers building. The former Three Crowns is the more prominent section to be removed. It is in a poor state of repair and detracts visually from the attractive main building. The structures to the rear are similarly of little aesthetic value.
- 9.4 Details of scale and appearance are matters reserved for subsequent approval. It will be necessary for the resultant designs to ensure they positively complement the retained building.
- 9.5 In this context, the proposals have the potential to enhance the setting of the building and therefore would result in no harm to the significance of the heritage asset.
- 9.6 In respect of the loss of the public house use, this previous use ceased more than 10 years ago, leading to its subsequent use as a food bank. The building is presently vacant.
- 9.7 The proposals will allow for the creation of new commercial floorspace. It will also help

improve the interface with the relocated outdoor market on George Square and the partial removal of building footprint to the side will allow improved pedestrian links from the bus station to the market site.

10. HIGHWAYS ISSUES

- 10.1 NPPF paragraph 116 states that “development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe”.
- 10.2 The site does not include any existing on-site parking or servicing facilities. This arrangement will continue.
- 10.3 As noted above, the removal of part of the existing footprint will enhance pedestrian movement around the site.
- 10.4 In these circumstances, the Highways Officer has no objections to the proposals.

11. BIODIVERSITY

- 11.1 Biodiversity Net Gain is required under the statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021).
- 11.2 This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. As a clear preference, this increase should be achieved through on-site biodiversity gains.
- 11.3 Based on the application site which contains no biodiversity features, the development would not be subject to the statutory BNG requirement.
- 11.4 No direct ecological assessment of the building has been carried out. However, an assessment for the adjacent Magistrates’ Court site concluded that existing trees would have negligible suitability for bats whilst the area is subject to bright street lighting and heavy human disturbance further reducing its suitability.
- 11.5 Nevertheless, the decision notice will remind the applicant of their responsibilities in respect of bats and nesting birds.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The proposals will result in a number of significant benefits. These include removal of presently poor-quality structures and enhancement of the setting of Manchester Chambers, along with the creation of improved access to and interface with George Square.

13. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

- 1. Application for approval of the reserved matters of 1) Access 2) Appearance 3) Landscape 4) Layout and 5) Scale shall be made to the Local Planning Authority before

the expiration of 10 years from the date of this permission. The commencement of development of each plot (as defined on approved plan 18505-HBA-ZZ-GF-D-A-080023 P04) must be no later than the expiration of 3 years from the final approval of the reserved matters relating to that development plot.

REASON - To comply with the provisions of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby approved shall be fully implemented in accordance with the Approved Details Schedule list on this decision notice unless variation from approved plans is required by any other condition of this permission. REASON - For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications.
3. All applications for Reserved Matters shall be in accordance with the following approved Parameter Plans: 18505-HBA-ZZ-ZZ-D-A-080020 P04, 18505-HBA-ZZ-ZZ-D-A-080021 P02, 18505-HBA-ZZ-GF-D-A-080023 P04, 18505-HBA-ZZ-ZZ-D-A-080025 P04, 18505-HBA-ZZ-ZZ-D-A-080026 P04, 18505-HBA-ZZ-ZZ-D-A-080027 P04, and 18505-HBA-ZZ-ZZ-D-A-080028 P03. REASON - In order to ensure that the developed scheme accords with the parameters used to assess the impact this proposal will have on its surroundings, including the neighbouring buildings, having regard to Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan.
4. No demolition works or construction works (whether undertaken as a single or separate operation) shall be commenced until details for the methods to be employed to control and monitor noise and dust, arrangements for demolition/construction vehicle access (including scheduling of deliveries, loading and unloading of plant and materials, storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development, and demolition/construction methods to be used); and details of measures to safeguard pedestrian access adjacent to the site, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details. REASON – To safeguard the amenities of the area having regard to Policy 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.
5. Unless undertaken as part of a single building operation for the provision of new floorspace, no demolition works shall be undertaken unless a scheme for the treatment of exposed surfaces to Manchester Chambers has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved scheme. REASON – In the interest of protecting the non-designated heritage asset having regard to Policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Document.

SITE LOCATION PLAN (NOT TO SCALE)

