

APPLICATION REPORT – FUL/354322/25
Planning Committee 2nd July 2025

Registration Date: 9th April 2025
Ward: Coldhurst

Application Reference: FUL/354322/25
Type of Application: Full

Proposal: Change of use of Civic Centre Tower from office (Use Class E(c))
to hotel (Use Class C1)

Location: Civic Tower, West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UT

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 relates to the existing 15 storey Civic Tower which was built in the 1970s in connection with the larger Civic Centre complex.
- 3.2 The building is located in an elevated position in the south-east corner of the Civic Centre site adjacent to Oldham Bus Station.
- 3.3 The building was previously utilised as local authority offices with a public reception area on the ground floor. It is now vacant following the transfer of functions to the Spindles.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal involves the re-use of the building as a hotel.
- 4.2 No details of necessary internal or external alterations to facilitate the change are available. It is estimated that approximately 126 bedrooms could be accommodated, although this will be dependent on the specific requirements of a future occupier.

5. PLANNING HISTORY

OUT/354338/25 - Hybrid planning application seeking: - 1. Permission for demolition of existing buildings. 2. Full planning permission for residential development (Block A) (Use Class C3) with associated access, servicing, parking, public realm and landscaping. 3. Outline planning permission for development of a mix of uses, comprising residential units (Use Class C3); ancillary commercial, business and service uses (Use Classes E and F1) with associated access, servicing, parking, public realm and landscaping. All matters reserved for future determination save for primary access. Pending determination

PA/333862/13 - Replacement of 5 no. antennas, additional 1 no. antenna, 1 no. dish and 2 no. equipment cabinets. Approved 16 May 2013

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-P4: New Retail and Leisure Uses in Town Centres
Policy JP-C8: Transport Requirements of New Development

Core Strategy

Policy 9: Local Environment
Policy 15: Centres
Policy 21: Protecting Natural Environmental Assets

7. CONSULTATIONS

Highways Officer	Clarification will be required for servicing arrangements
United Utilities	No objections on the assumption that existing drainage connections will be used.

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 by display of a site notice.
- 8.2 In response three representations have been received raising the following issues:
- There is a lack of parking available for a potential 100 plus room hotel.
 - Concern regarding limited parking which will be available (one bay) for disabled persons.
 - Notes that there is only one useable lift.
 - Queries the range of uses within Class C1, which includes a hostel leading to a potential increase in crime.
 - Questions the need for a town centre hotel.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL

9. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 9.1 Places for Everyone Policy JP-P4 indicates that large-scale retail and leisure development will be located within centres at the upper level of the hierarchy, including Oldham town centre, an approach which reflects Local Plan Policy 15.
- 9.2 As part of the wider town centre regeneration proposals, it is proposed that the Civic Tower will be retained and for alternative uses to be considered.
- 9.3 The proposed use has been identified as providing an appropriate inward investment opportunity to function alongside the adjacent residential scheme as part of the wider vision for the regeneration of the Civic Centre site.
- 9.4 It would introduce a use which would generate additional visits to the town centre and represent an acceptable activity which would be complementary to the adjacent new residential developments.
- 9.5 In the representations, reference is made to the possibility of the building being utilised as a hotel. The courts have held that whether planning permission is required to change use from a hotel to a hostel would depend on the individual planning circumstances.
- 9.6 Notwithstanding the rights afforded by the Use Classes Order, the building is in the ownership of the Council and therefore would be capable of retaining control over the use of the building.
- 9.7 The proposed re-use forms part of the Council's wider aspirations for regeneration of the wider Civic centre site. In this context, use of the building as a hostel would not represent an activity conducive to attracting inward investment for the residential

scheme.

10. DESIGN AND LAYOUT

- 10.1 The application seeks approval for the principle of the proposed use only, and therefore, no details are presently available in relation to the resultant internal layout. This would be devised subsequently to meet the needs of a future hotel operator.
- 10.2 In providing hotel accommodation within the building, it will be necessary for compliance with Fire Regulations to ensure the safety of guests. At present the building has access to a pair of lifts and two separate staircases.
- 10.3 Any material alterations to the exterior of the building would be subject to a separate planning application. This would also apply to the addition of new advertising.

11. HIGHWAYS ISSUES

- 11.1 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”.
- 11.2 Parking to service the building will be limited to short-stay areas for deliveries, service vehicles, and taxi drop-off/ pick-up. A bay for disabled persons’ parking will be provided as part of the wider Civic Centre site redevelopment.
- 11.3 Whilst the parking facilities will be limited, guests utilising town centre hotels will be aware of those limitations and plan the visit accordingly.
- 11.4 Given the proposed redevelopment of the wider Civic Centre site, the availability of parking and servicing may vary dependent on the timing of implementation of the proposals. It is therefore recommended that the future operator will need to confirm the arrangements prior to commencement of the use.
- 11.5 A condition has been recommended to require prior submission of such details.

12. BIODIVERSITY

- 12.1 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).
- 12.2 Based on the application site and indicative proposals, the development would not be subject to the statutory BNG requirement.
- 12.3 It is noted that Peregrine falcon, a protected species within Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, are known to nest on the building.
- 12.4 Consequently, A condition is recommendation to ensure that no work, such as the installation of new plant and equipment, is carried out to the birds and their nests are not disturbed.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 The proposed re-use of the building would further assist the regeneration of the town centre alongside the proposed redevelopment of the adjacent Civic Centre and Magistrates' Court sites.
- 13.2 As no operator is identified at this stage, further details will be required to ensure the building can be appropriately serviced prior to occupation.
- 13.3 The proposed conversion to a hotel would allow the continued productive use of the retained building and would be a fully policy compliant use in this town centre location.

14. RECOMMENDED 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 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.

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

- 3. Prior to the installation of any additional/ replacement plant or equipment to the roof of the building, an assessment shall be carried out by a suitably qualified person to determine whether protected bird species are present. Where such presence is identified, a scheme of measures to protect the birds shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON – To ensure the protection of bird habitats which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 having regard to Policy 21 of the Oldham Local Plan.

- 4. The use hereby approved shall not be commenced until details of arrangements for servicing of the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The use thereafter shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

REASON – In order to secure satisfactory access having regard to Policy JP-C8 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan.

SITE LOCATION PLAN (NOT TO SCALE)

