Historic England

Mr Neil Bearcroft
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Direct Dial: 01904 601982

Our ref: L01073181

10 June 2019

Dear Mr Bearcroft

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

THE GEORGE HOTEL, ST GEORGE'S SQUARE, HUDDERSFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE HD1 1JA
Application Nos 2019/91506 & 2019/91505

Thank you for your letters of 21 May 2019 regarding the above applications for listed building consent and planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the applications.

Summary

Historic England would like to see the George Hotel brought back in to use and we welcome these applications. The George Hotel is a highly significant building, particularly for sports fans as the place where Rugby League was born in 1895. On the whole, the proposed uses are appropriate to the character and significance of the building but we have some concerns about the visual and physical impact in a few areas. We recommend the proposal to create unit 3 is omitted from the proposals, unless it can be shown that there is a clear need for this additional unit. Further detail is also required on the proposed glazed screens and how they interact with historic features.

Given the significance of the building and its prominent location within Huddersfield town centre, we would welcome the opportunity of advising further on the details of the scheme, as we are keen to see the building repaired and brought back in to use in a sympathetic manner.

Historic England Advice

The George Hotel is not only significant because of its architectural quality but also because it has very high social and community value, as it was here that Rugby

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League was established in 1895. Fronting onto St. George's Square, it is a key element in Huddersfield's Victorian 'new town' and forms part of the setting of the grade I listed railway station.

The George Hotel has been closed for many years and the exhibits from the Rugby League Heritage Centre which was formerly in the basement were relocated. England will host the Rugby League World Cup in 2021 and there is a prime opportunity for supporters to be able to visit the birthplace of the game and view the exhibits back in this important building.

Historic England is therefore supportive of proposals to bring the building back in to use. The proposed use as an aparthotel on the upper floors is compatible with the building's original and historic function, while the proposed commercial units will allow an element of public access to the ground floor and basement spaces.

We do have some concerns about the impact of the proposed subdivision of the ground floor, both in terms of the visual impact of the glazed screens and the on-going management issues of these separate units. Units 1 and 2 lend themselves well to function room/ restaurant use and can be fairly discretely separated into independent units. The proposed alterations to create unit 3 would have a greater visual and physical impact (see below). We have discussed this briefly with the applicants' agent and we understand these units would be retained by the owner of the building and leased to occupants, which we do think is important in maintaining overall control of any alterations within these units.

We consider the proposed glazed screens to unit 3 and the base of the main staircase would cause some harm to the historic character of the lobby and this aspect of the proposals therefore requires a "clear and convincing justification" (NPPF, paragraph 194). The area proposed for unit 3 should be retained as part of the lobby for use of the guests of the aparthotel unless it can be demonstrated that this aspect of the proposals is necessary to deliver the whole scheme. If this is the case, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF.

Elevations of the proposed glazed screens to units 1 and 3 and the main staircase should also be submitted to illustrate the visual impact of these interventions on existing features such as columns and cornices and the coffered ceiling of the lobby.

Finally, the proposal to reinstate the Rugby League Heritage Centre in the basement is a key public benefit which could outweigh the harm caused by some of the proposed alterations. We strongly support this aspect of the proposals and recommend your authority considers mechanisms to secure this through any consent which may be granted.

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Recommendation
Historic England has concerns regarding the applications on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the applications to meet the requirements of paragraphs 194 and 196 of the NPPF.

In determining these applications you should bear in mind the statutory duty of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely



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cc: Hamish Gledhill, Acumen Architects

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