

Consultation Response from KC, Conservation & Design
2022/93248 Piazza Centre, Princess Alexandra Walk, Huddersfield, HD1 2RS

Demolition of existing Piazza shopping centre; part removal of Queensgate Market; demolition/retention of service tunnels; redevelopment of the site to form new public realm space (including public park and gardens, play areas, public square/outdoor event space); refurbishment and change of use of existing Queensgate Market Hall into food hall (Use Class E (b) sale of food and drink for consumption, mostly, on the premises); refurbishment and extension of existing library and art gallery building to form museum (Use Class F.1); change of use of part existing market hall building and extension to form public library (Use Class F.1); erection of indoor event venue incorporating multi-storey car park below (Sui-Generis); erection of public gallery building (Class F.1); associated infrastructure on land and buildings at Queensgate Market, Huddersfield Library and Art Gallery, and Piazza (and The Shambles) Shopping Centre (part Listed Building/part within a Conservation Area)

Date Responded: 20.2.2023
Responding Officer: Sue Brooks
Responding Ref:

The Piazza is an area of land situated within Huddersfield town centre and surrounded on three sides by the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area. Within the site is Queensgate Market, a substantial Grade II listed market hall building constructed between 1968-70, and the Grade II listed Art Deco Huddersfield Library and Art Gallery. Surrounding the proposal site are many Grade II listed buildings, including Huddersfield Town Hall and the former County Police Station on Princess Street, on the opposite side of the ring road to the west are the Grade II listed university buildings St Paul's Hall, Ramsden Building and Sir Patrick Stewart Building. Directly east on Queen Street is a Grade II listed terrace along with the Grade II* listed Lawrence Batley Theatre, a former Methodist Chapel. To the north are more listed buildings on King Street and Victoria Lane.

Proposal

The proposal is to redevelop the Piazza area, with alterations to the market hall and library, demolition of the 20th century buildings/retail units and replacement with new buildings, and public realm enhancements. Associated applications have been submitted alongside this application to convert Queensgate Market into a new food hall, with a public library built onto the east wing and extending into part of the existing building, along with the restoration and extension of the existing Library and Art Gallery to convert it into a museum.

Demolition

Extensive demolition of late 20th century buildings is proposed, with the removal of the parade of shops on the east side of the Piazza, which were constructed in the 1980's, along with the modern shop units to the north of the library. These buildings have no historic significance and therefore the Conservation and Design Team has no objections to their demolition to enable the enhancement and redevelopment of a large part of the town centre. The removal of a substantial and rather blank elevation facing Queen Street will greatly enhance the setting of the Grade II* listed Lawrence Batley Theatre, with extensive new landscaping providing an attractive open space connecting the Piazza with the wider town, in particular King Street and Queen Street.

The partial demolition of the parade of shops at the northern end of Queensgate Market is proposed and is supported. This parade was added to the market hall shortly after it was built and makes no contribution to the architectural interest or significance of the building. Demolishing it will provide an outdoor leisure and event space which is well connected to the food hall in the market building. Details are discussed within the listed building consent application 2022/93235.

Demolition of the multi-storey car park at the southern end of the site has already been carried out.

Queensgate Market (Proposed Library and Food Hall)

The Conservation and Design Team supports this proposal, which is assessed in the listed building consent application 2022/93235.

Huddersfield Library and Art Gallery (Proposed Museum)

Following minor amendments to the design, and justification for the scale and detailing of the extension, the Conservation and Design Team supports this proposal which is assessed in more detail under the listed building consent application 2022/93234.

Gallery

A public gallery is proposed on the site of the parade of Piazza shops which backs onto Queen Street. This linear building extends along Queen Street, stopping short of the Lawrence Batley Theatre, where a wide set of steps leads down from the proposed urban park.

The building is constructed in natural stone with expanses of glazing and elements in dark metal (colour and details to be confirmed). The design of the gallery buildings follows the theme within the Piazza area, with natural stone and dark metal cladding, with the architectural detailing complementing the detailing on the Library and Art Gallery (museum) extension and providing a coherent development. A live frontage at street level on Queen Street brings interest to this elevation and is considered to be an enhancement to the existing building. We accept that the basement level service areas need to be retained with associated access requirements as this will minimise clutter at street level.

A taller gallery building is proposed on the corner of Queen Street and Queensgate. Having initially considered that this building had the potential to dominate the corner, the design has been further amended to break up the massing by introducing more fenestration facing the proposed steps. Colour and texture of final materials will also play an important role in providing a coherent element to the development as a whole. As the building is set back from the corner of Queen Street its impact on the setting of the listed terrace on the east side of Queen Street is kept to a minimum, with a large tree on the junction retained to soften and partially obscure the east elevation.

We have no objections to this proposal, subject to details of external materials being submitted for approval. We would suggest that the areas of dark metal are in a patinated bronze colour to provide continuity with the Library and Art Gallery (museum) building.

The Venue

The Venue is a substantial building which replaces the recently demolished multi-storey car park. A key consideration is the impact of this building on the setting of the listed Queensgate Market. Set directly adjacent to the ring road, it is considered that the site can accommodate a large well-designed and well-proportioned building. The scale of the building has been justified by the need to provide a large venue for indoor events along with undercroft car parking at the lower levels. The previous multi-storey car park set a precedent for a large-scale building on this site, and even before that the site was occupied by warehouses and college buildings which are likely to have been tall buildings. Located on a prominent corner plot and key gateway into the town centre, officers consider the Venue to make a strong and positive contemporary architectural contribution.

Initial queries regarding the scale of the building and the vertical emphasis of the external elevations, particularly facing Queensgate, to minimise any conflict with the horizontal emphasis of Queensgate Market and its parabolic mushrooms have been further explored and overcome resulting in some minor changes being made to the east elevation, with horizontal detailing following the line of the

market building, glazing and external finishes at ring road level creating a live frontage which reduces the visual massing.

The predominant construction material in the immediate vicinity is natural stone. It is therefore important that any new material palette both respects and enhances the surrounding context and setting. This can be achieved by using contemporary design and materials and it is considered that securing high quality materials and finishes will significantly contribute to the overall success of the scheme. For this reason, it is imperative that parameters relating to material selection and colour finishes/textures are broadly outlined prior to determination. To this end, the applicant/architect has provided additional information regarding proposed materials and indicative colour swatches for each aspect of the scheme which are broadly accepted. However, such matters will need to be finalised and approved via the imposition of carefully worded conditions in order to secure the high quality of design and materials being tabled in this application and to avoid any potential future dilution of the scheme via amendments or resubmissions.

Landscaping

Demolition of the modern Piazza shop units will open up views across Queen Street and King Street, greatly improving the connectivity of this area with the historic town centre to the north and east. Views of the Grade II* listed Lawrence Batley Theatre will be significantly improved with the demolition of a substantial and relatively blank wall at the rear of the late 20th century Piazza development.

New steps from the Piazza to Queen Street and the university will provide greatly improved access to the wider town, and improved connectivity both visually and physically, with paths leading from the wider town to provide level access. The demolition of the shops at Queensgate Market will better reveal the significance of Huddersfield Town Hall and enhance its setting.

It is essential that the materials, boundary treatments, street furniture and planting are of a high quality and finish resulting in minimal clutter and a well-considered palette, with well-designed anti-social measures and a maintenance plan put in place. Again, it is recommended that a set of landscape parameters relating to materials and finishes should be outlined and agreed prior to determination to secure the high quality of design and materials being tabled in this application and to avoid any potential future dilution of the scheme via amendments or resubmissions.

Conclusion

The Conservation and Design Team supports the Cultural Heart initiative, with the redevelopment of an area of the town which is currently under-used and which has great potential. A strong emphasis is placed on the restoration and viable reuses of Queensgate Market and Huddersfield Library and Art Gallery, with new links to the historic King Street, Queen Street and the wider town centre.

The demolition of modern retail buildings within the Piazza is supported as this will greatly enhance this part of the town and the setting of the listed buildings and conservation area, while creating a high-quality area for cultural and leisure uses. We welcome the proposed re-use of reclaimed materials, particularly the ashlar stone, from the demolition of the Piazza buildings.

We welcome the restoration and adaptation of the listed market and library building, with the repair and restoration of deteriorated elements, improvements to energy efficiency and accessibility, and new sustainable and new viable public uses. We understand that some major changes are proposed to these buildings to facilitate its future reuse. It is considered that the public benefits arising from such changes outweighs the minor harm arising and in tandem, other aspects of the scheme seek to ensure that the overall character of both buildings is maintained, with architectural elements restored, enhanced and its significance better revealed.

It is acknowledged that some elements of the proposal, including the changes referred to above and the construction of substantial buildings, cause less than substantial harm to the heritage assets within and surrounding the site. Negotiations have taken place to reduce/limit the harm and minor amendments have been made in line with comments by the Conservation and Design Team, with clear justification submitted where changes would impact on the function of the buildings and internal space.

This harm is clearly outweighed by the substantial public benefits, with the redevelopment of an underused part of town and creation of a cultural area for public use, the enhancement of a significant space within the town, and the restoration, enhancement and active re-use of Queensgate Market and Huddersfield Library and Art Gallery.

In conclusion, we have no objections to the scheme, but in order to secure the high quality of design and finish proposed, it is recommended that the following conditions and those attached to the associated listed building consent applications are imposed.

Recommended conditions

If the application is supported, we recommend the following conditions (the wording of conditions to be drafted and agreed between the parties but should include the following as standard):

- Details of all external materials for all new construction to be submitted for approval. Including samples of ceramic cladding and facing materials for the Venue, all new building stone and cladding, bronze cladding for the west bay of the Library and Art Gallery, access ramp details and materials, window frame details. These are required to ensure a high-quality external finish and colour to the buildings.
- Landscaping details, materials, street furniture design, anti-social behaviour measures, a landscape strategy and a maintenance plan.
- External lighting strategy including specification details of lighting proposed, particularly for The Venue and Gallery.