

Ms Jillian Rann
Kirklees Council Planning Department
Via email

27 May 2025

DC.admin@kirklees.gov.uk

Dear Ms Rann

RE: 2025/91148 | The George Hotel, St George's Square, Huddersfield, HD1 1JA (Grade II*, Conservation Area, *William Wallen*, 1849 with later extensions). Application for major demolition and redevelopment to create a 96+ bed hotel with restaurant, gym, bar and 3 rentable meeting spaces.

Thank you for consulting the Victorian Society on this application. Our Building Committee (a group of architects, historians and heritage professionals) considered the proposal carefully at their meeting on the 12th May 2025. We **object** to these revised plans in their current form but are willing to engage further on the redevelopment of this important building. The Society previously objected to similar applications for the Goerge Hotel in February and June, 2023.

Built in 1849 as a Railway Hotel by *William Wallen*, the George Hotel is a Grade II*-listed building, meaning it is nationally recognised for its remarkable significance and special interest. It sits in the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area and shares this iconic and important setting with: the Grade I Railway Station (*James Prichett*, 1846-50); the Grade II* Britannia Buildings (*William Cocking*, c.1858); Grade II* Lion Buildings (*James Prichett*, 1853). It is clear then that George Square holds phenomenal architectural, historical and national interest, as well as being a source of local pride for Huddersfield and the community.

The application harms the setting of this Conservation Area and other listed buildings by demolishing a large amount of the Grade II*-listed George Hotel to create a 96+ bed hotel in a jarring architectural language. This proposal will not only irreversibly harm the George Hotel, will also have a negative impact on the setting of no fewer than 8 listed buildings.

Campaigning for
Victorian & Edwardian
Built Heritage

The Victorian Society

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Demolition of a Grade II*-Listed Building

The National Planning Policy Framework is very clear: ‘assets of the highest significance, notably... grade I and II* listed buildings... [demolition] should be wholly exceptional’ (2024, para. 213). Any form of demolition or alteration to this building ‘of the highest significance’ also requires clear and convincing justification (NPPF 2024, para. 212-215). This application has not yet done this effectively. The justification for the demolition of ‘Block C’ at the rear of the building (built late C19th-C20th) is that questions were raised as to its structural integrity due to dry rot. However, a corresponding structural report could not be found with the application. This specific demolition has certainly not fulfilled the NPPF (2024) and can only be considered as unjustified. Clear and convincing evidence must be supplied as to the buildings structural condition if the justification for demolition is reliant on its lack of structural integrity. Repair works and conservation were carried out by Historic England and Kirklees Council as recently as 2023 as a part of the Huddersfield High Street Heritage Action Zone.

The Replacement Building

The proposed designs of the replacement building is inappropriate to both the character of the listed building itself, but also the wider Conservation Area. The architectural language of the proposed scheme is not in dialogue with the wider streetscape; it does not reflect the building it is to replace nor the surrounding buildings.

The John William Street façade’s replacement does not mirror what was there originally. This is not a like-for-like replacement and would further erode and harm the character of a Listed Building. It is not a sympathetic replacement. Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal highlights how the ‘railway quarter’ is dominated by Classical and Italianate architecture; any additions to this space must adhere to its current character, scale and form.

Further to this, the Society feel that the massing of the building is too great – the proposed roofline should not dominate that of the original building. The Conservation Area Appraisal details how important built form is to the Conservation Area, and how sensitive this area is to inappropriate alterations; the George Hotel is highlighted as a key landmark in Huddersfield Town Centre, meaning it is particularly recognised for its positive contribution.

In conclusion, the Society objects to any form of demolition at The George Hotel without clear and convincing justification for such irreversible change. Any demolition should be wholly exceptional and should not be on this scale. Secondly, even if your Authority accepts the principle of demolition on such a scale, the replacement building is inappropriate to this sensitive and characterful Conservation Area, surrounded by a considerable concentration of

high-grade listed buildings. Finally, we also highlight the lack of a detailed and comprehensive Structural Statement to help justify the proposed works, especially regarding 'Block C'.

The Society would like to engage further with the process of preserving and reusing The George Hotel. It is an important building for Huddersfield, but also the UK, detailing its expansion and adoption of industry and railways in the C19th and the tourism that came as a result. We object to the current plans, but welcome revisions to minimise harm and maximise reuse of historic fabric and character. We support the principle of reuse for this significant building.

The Society strongly urges your Authority to refuse this application. I would be grateful if you could inform the Victorian Society of your decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Ollivier
Northern Conservation Adviser