Historic England

Ms Jillian Rann
Kirklees Council

Direct Dial: 01904 601957

Our ref: L01592148
20 June 2025

Dear Ms Rann

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

GEORGE HOTEL, ST GEORGE'S SQUARE, HUDDERSFIELD, HD1 1JA
Application Nos 2025/65/91148/W & 2025/48/91147/W

Thank you for your letters of 7 May 2025 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.

Historic England Advice

Significance

The George Hotel was constructed from 1849-50 in the Italianate style. It is the former railway hotel associated with Huddersfield Railway Station which is one of the finest stations in the country. The George Hotel, the station, and the Britannia Buildings surrounding St George's Square were constructed during a period of new building in Huddersfield under Ramsden Estate's 'New Towns Development' which was an example of town planning without precedent in terms of scale and ambition at this time. These three buildings whilst individually being incredibly architecturally significant in isolation, also therefore possess an important group value as a consequence.

The George itself utilises high quality, decorative detailing to its exterior to visually impress those travelling via rail to Huddersfield. It has an almost landmark character when entering St George's Square form the Railway Station and this detailing and massing contribute highly to its significance.

The George Hotel itself has evolved over three main phases since its original construction and the original external appearance and internal plan form and circulation routes have been preserved in what is commonly known as 'Block A' which is the building facing onto the Square.

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Historic England have worked closely with Applicants which led to the 1850 and 1938 rear blocks being removed from the listing with the exception of a portion of the John William Street elevation whose character contributes to formal and well detailed character of Block A.

As well as The George's fine architectural appearance and association with the success of Huddersfield as a key point on the railway line between Manchester and Leeds, it is also the home of Rugby Football League. It was originally termed the Northern Rugby Football Union to distinguish it form middling-class southern clubs who wanted to keep the game at an amateur level. This was an important point in history for the game of Rugby which allowed players who worked to not miss pay in order to play for their rugby team. Whilst the exact room the paperwork was signed in 1895 has been speculated upon, it is considered that this important event happened in what is now called the Commercial Room.

Overall the significance is characterised by the fine Italianate architecture, the connections with Rugby League, its plan form and volume of spaces, and its association with the success of Huddersfield Railway Station and new town building during the mid 19th century. Consequently, it has been designated at GII* making it one of the country's most important heritage assets.

Impact

Demolition of Blocks B and C

The principle of the demolition of Blocks B and C was explored in the consented scheme (LPA REF: 2023/65/90112/E) and our advice was that the structural work required for large scale retention was extensive and we agreed that their loss would amount to a less than substantial amount of harm.

We maintain this advice relating to the loss of Blocks B and C.

Treatment of John William Street Elevation

The proposal is to demolish, or take down, the John William Street elevation, record the individual stones and then rebuild the elevation in its original location whilst altering some of the fenestration.

This would cause a moderate level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building through diminished evidential values and therefore this harm should look to be clearly and convincingly justified and outweighed by any public benefits which are considered to arise from the proposal. The need for clear and convincing

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justification is explored below.

Conversion of Block A

Broadly the conversion of Block A will have a positive impact on the significance which looks to largely preserve the 1930s lobby decorative scheme, the hierarchy of decorative schemes when moving throughout the hotel, the highly decorative stair is set to be repaired, and the upper, water-damage floors are to be repaired.

We have some concerns about the potential cumulative harm which could be caused by some of the interior elements in Block A such as the visual impact of service rafts, lighting design in significant spaces, and the design of the balustrade to improve stair safety.

We acknowledge that it is a necessity to improve stair safety however we would ask the applicant to explore design options to lessen its potential visual impact.

New Build Element

In our advice from the previous scheme we advised that the materiality and design of the new build element should be of the highest quality given the heritage sensitivity of the area.

The new build elevations could do more to enhance the significance of the listed buildings, including via their settings, by having more interesting and animated elevations. In its current form the design would not celebrate the significance of the site and does not contribute to our understanding of this as a landmark building visitors to Huddersfield will look across at when leaving the railway station.

At this stage we consider that the effect of the proposed new build element does not quite achieve that threshold and could be amended to ensure that the new build element enhances the significance of the listed building. Results in a level of modest level of less than substantial harm.

Policy

NPPF

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF states that, irrespective of the level of harm caused to the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be awarded to its conservation.

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As per paragraph 213 of the NPPF where any amount of harm would be caused to the significance of a designated heritage asset this requires clear and convincing justification for the harm caused.

Paragraph 215 states that where a proposal would cause less than substantial harm this harm should be weighed against the perceived public benefits of the scheme and were possible securing its optimum viable use.

Position

Overall Historic England are supportive of the development at The George Hotel which seeks to find a sustainable future for what is an incredibly significant building not only for its architectural character but also its important role during Huddersfield's 'heroic' railway period, and as the home of Rugby Football League.

However, Historic England presently have some concerns relating to the supporting information which is required to demonstrate 'clear and convincing justification' as per paragraph 213 of the NPPF.

We would require the structural work carried out by the structural consultants to be presented to understand the financial and structural need to demolish and then rebuild the John William Street elevation. These documents should robustly demonstrate this need to ensure the clear and convincing justification is provided.

Similarly, we would point to the proposed new build elements of the proposal. In our previous advice 9th May 2023 we had stated that it was crucial that the design and materiality of the proposed new build element was to be of very high quality. This is particularly important given the positioning of the hotel and its relationship with the Railway Station.

In the proposals current form we consider that the design of the new build elements should look to achieve more as to further enhance the setting of the George Hotel and the Railway Station.

We would welcome further conversations with the Applicant or should amended plans and the structural evidence be provided then we would kindly request that we are reconsulted.

Recommendation

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be

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addressed in order for the applications to meet the requirements of paragraphs 212, 213, and 215 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.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Harrison
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas
E-mail: Alexander.Harrison@historicengland.org.uk

cc:

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