2024.00373.000

George Hotel
Refurbishment (Planning & LBC)
Response – The Victorian Society
05.08.25

(File Ref: 2025_4891147_W - 11 - Response - VICSOC_05.08.25)

Shaping places that have
a positive impact

August 2025

Index

- Introduction
- Consultee Comment – Victorian Society
- Applicant Response – AHR Architects & Building Consultants

Revision	Date	By
01	05.08.25	AHR Building Consultancy

Introduction

APPLICATION REFERENCE AND DOCUMENTS:

This mini-report seeks to record the matters pertaining to comments received from the following consultees:

Statutory Consultees:
- Victorian Society - 09.07.25

AIM OF THIS REPORT:

The aim of this report is to provide the Lead Planning Officer and relevant parties with a singular point of reference in respect of the submitted material, the Statutory Consultee's and neighbourhood representative queries/ comments and a record of formal response by the applicant and/ or their appointed sub-consultants (Specialist).

In this case the response is ostensibly Authored by the appointed Conservation Architect Consultant Richard Storah (RIBA AABC SCA IHBC).

BACKGROUND:

This record of dialog is to be read as ongoing dialog previously recorded in the document:

- 2025_4891147_W - 08 - Response - VICSOC_SBH_CC_20th C.pdf

It is also noted that this report has been prepared in response to the letter dated 09 July 2025 which was received following the site visit by The Victorian Society on 1st July but prior to the resubmission of further justifications and material and subsequent re-consultation.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

Following receipt of the Victorian society, a number of redesign documents and records of dialogue with Historic England/ Local Authority Conservation Officers have been submitted and as such would like to bring to the Victorian Society's attention the following key re-consultation documents forming part of the response in this report.

- 02_05 App E - Structural Deflection Record.pdf
    - Record of JWS defe=lection and condition issues.
- 02_2025_4891147_W - 05 - Response - JWS Wall.pdf
    - Report to Historic England collating the JWS wall construction related matters.
- 2025_4891147_W - 10 - Response - HE_v3 - 10.07.25.pdf
    - Design report issued to Historic England as record of design development discussions, justifications & upper glazing sections.
- 04_4_L054-AHR-20-BA-00-D-A-20203_P2 - Conference Room - Refurb Strat.pdf
    - Example of drawing led Conservation Management Strategy/plans (all floors covered on other drawings).

Consultee Comment (The Victorian Society)

Ref: 250716 Victorian Society.PDF
Date: 09.07.25
From: The Victorian Society (Ref: 205955)
Officer: Thomas Ollivier

The consultee has formally posted comments upon the portal and has made the following **Objection** (noting changes from previous comments):

Following our previous comments, a site visit to The George Hotel was carried out on 1 July 2025, where we met with representatives of Kirklees Council, members of AHR Architects (Tim Ordway and Matt Stephenson) and Richard Storah of Storah Architecture. The Victorian Society and its Northern Buildings Committee was represented by Alan Davies, Mark Watson and Thomas Ollivier.

We are very grateful for the opportunity to visit the site, which has provided a greater understanding of the challenges facing this building, the extent of remaining historic fabric, the structural concerns surrounding areas of the George and the nuances of its significance following C20th alterations.

We also recognise that the proposed reuse of the building is a continuation of the historic use of the George and, in principle, a fantastic opportunity for Huddersfield and the wider Kirklees area. We took this application back to our Northern Buildings Committee, and, coupled with the information and experiences gathered at the site visit, the wider Committee shared its support for the reuse of the George as a hotel and its eagerness to see a sympathetic and conservation-led approach to its preservation.

*We highlight that while the state of the building is challenging, and the scale substantial, it is not exactly an unusual case for the conservation of heritage buildings, and buildings in a far more urgent state of disrepair have been very successfully redeveloped with ample consideration to their significance and character. In reference to our last letter, the Committee still hold some concerns regarding the application; thus, **we maintain an objection** to part of these proposed plans. These concerns can be broken down into three categories:*

- *the impact on the conservation area;*
- *the role of conservation architects;*
- *and the role of the Conservation Management Plan.*

Demolition

*Following the site visit, the Society's concerns regarding the scale and nature of demolition are greatly allayed and we therefore **withdraw our objection** to the demolition of 'Block B' and 'Block C'. We are now better aware of the structural problems faced by the John William Street façade (Block C) and the nature of the C20th material in the delisted wing (Block B). We of course still advocate for a nuanced and careful approach to demolition, as any loss of historic fabric will harm the significance of the building. The level of loss needs to be very clearly understood, and this is best done with reference to a clear and detailed Conservation Management Plan in tandem with the application.*

Consultee Comment (The Victorian Society)

Impact on the Conservation Area

We remain concerned that the value of the building has not been adequately assessed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), and while it is recognised by the application that the George is a Grade II-listed building, this value is not reflected in the 'replacement' architecture. The George forms a key part of St George's Square and is a building of high national importance. Its Classical/French Empire inspired edifices are a key contributor to the Huddersfield Central Conservation Area. It 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 St George's Square holds high architectural, historical and national interest, as well as being a source of local pride for Huddersfield and the community. While an element of this pride and importance was shared with us verbally on the site visit, the proposals would be better served if this were reflected in a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan.*

Our remaining concern then, regarding this application, remains the architectural language of the proposed replacements for Blocks B and C. The Committee feel that these are rather uninspired, and neither reflect or respond to Huddersfield nor the George. The Committee remains concerned regarding the impact of the proposed additions within the current scheme on the character and appearance of the conservation area, arguing that such uninspired architecture would fail to preserve or enhance the historic environment and conservation area (National Planning Policy Framework 2024, para. 219).

The objection is maintained to the new elements as currently proposed, whilst believing – and very much urging – that further consideration of the elevational treatment and the scale of the additions and roofscape could resolve these issues.

A scheme that more sympathetically responded to the wider architecture and character of the conservation area, and the George itself, is required. While we accept the requirements of modern health and safety law, building regulations and standards of living, none of this precludes a design that is more reflective of the C19th core of Huddersfield, which for this specific area (St George's Square) is remarkably untouched.

The Role of Conservation Architects

The Committee would recommend that the restoration and redevelopment of the Grade II- listed front of the George (Block A, 1849 by William Wallen) is somewhere where the Conservation Architects should take a more involved role, while still working alongside AHR. The challenges facing the George are not unusual for heritage buildings of this age and disuse: hidden problems, decay and structural defects are all part of the overall refurbishment for a building of this type. An experienced conservation architect would be able to navigate these challenges in a careful and considered way.*

A conservation architect's lead in this part of the building would ensure the preservation of key features, character and significance of the building, especially if this preservation is the 'balance' to offset the loss of the rear two blocks and subsequent harm.

Consultee Comment (The Victorian Society)

The Role of the Conservation Management Plan
A comprehensive and detailed Conservation Management Plan can be instrumental in understanding and mitigating harm to a heritage building, its character, setting and any remaining historic fabric. Crucially, in the case of the George, a Conservation Management Plan would be easily adapted, updated and managed in the event that new details, problems or solutions were found. We feel this is particularly pertinent as, during our site visit, many details were brought to light which would have been more easily understood as part of a Conservation Management Plan.

A Conservation Management Plan would also allow for a degree of 'variability' in the application, as it safeguards both known and unknown historic fabric from harm and would be easily referred to (by all parties) when required. Examples of works which would benefit from a Conservation Management Plan would be the elegant main stairs, alteration of historic planform and removal of C20th material of an unknown date.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Society still ***maintains an objection to part of these proposed works****. The main objection is to the design and unsympathetic language of the proposed extension. This does not enter a responsive and complementary dialogue with the building and the local streetscape, and would needlessly and unjustifiably impact and harm the significance of the listed building and the character of the conservation area. Happy resolution of the scale, bulk, and elevational and roofscape treatment of the new build elements of the scheme is necessary, and should be readily achievable.*

The Committee would also like to see a conservation architect take the lead over the preservation and restoration of Wallen's 1849 block, since this represents what may become the only surviving historic fabric of the Grade II building. Furthermore, a suitably comprehensive Conservation Management Plan should be produced, updated and referred to when necessary to ensure there is transparency in the works and any harm is mitigated as far as possible.*

We are concerned that there is much detail which seems unresolved, such that good conservation outcomes are not assured. There is no current Conservation Management Plan. An updated, relevant agreed Conservation Management Plan along with conservation-led decision making by the project's Conservation Architect could improve the conservation outcomes, particularly for the main building. Under these circumstances, should the Planning Authority be minded to approve the proposals, the treatment of the historic interiors should be strictly conditioned to mitigate harm to the historic fabric and significance of the listed building.

As a Society, we are keenly aware of what this project represents for Huddersfield and Kirklees. Regardless of whether your Authority approves or refuses this application, we are very eager to be available for further advice and consultation if required, to guide as best we can. As noted above, we would particularly welcome the opportunity to comment on revised proposals for the treatment of the new-build elements of the scheme.

Yours sincerely
Thomas Ollivier
Northern Conservation Adviser

Applicant Response (To The Victorian Society)

From: AHR Building Consultancy
Person: Richard Storah (RIBA AABC SCA IHBC), Conservation Architect

We discussed the Society's concerns at a site meeting on 1 July, when Alan Davies, Mark Watson and Thomas Ollivier attended on behalf of the Victorian Society.

Following this the Society have issued further comments to which we respond as follows:

Demolition

We are pleased that the Society have removed their objection to the demolition of Blocks B and C. They note that the level of loss needs to be very clearly understood and suggest that this is best done with reference to a clear and detailed Conservation Management Plan in tandem with the application. There is a clear and detailed statement of significance, and a heritage impact assessment submitted with the application, these with structural and condition reports and conservation refurbishment strategy drawings provide comprehensive information on significance, the issues affecting the building and impacts of the proposals.

These set out in all but name a Conservation Management Plan for the proposals. Due to the changing nature of the project, as evidenced by this second LBC application, the scope of the work has changed to suit the building condition as opening up has revealed further issues. A further CMP at this stage is considered inappropriate.

Impact on the Conservation Area

We share the Society's views that St George's Square holds high architectural, historical and national interest, as well as being a source of local pride for Huddersfield and the community. We retain the opinion though that the preparation of a further comprehensive Conservation Management Plan at this stage would be inappropriate and of little benefit. We would not wish to compromise the timeline and viability of the project by proposing one at this stage.

We agree with the Society that guidance for managing the asset in the future needs to be considered and would be happy for the condition of a CMP being prepared to guide the long term management of the asset on completion of the renovation works.

We consider the architectural language of the proposed replacements for Blocks B and C to be appropriate to both the George and it's context within the Conservation Area.

The proposals retain elements of the John William Street elevation, including the active facade of the dining spaces at it's base. They maintain the look and feel of the railway hotel when viewed from the train and the station continuing this massing around the corner of the building to terminate the John William Street Elevation. The conservation area contains good quality examples of buildings of many ages and styles which contribute to the conservation area and its character areas.

Applicant Response (To The Victorian Society)

Impact on the Conservation Area - ctd

These include the Classical style of the railway station, the Italianate George Hotel, the Gothic Revival style of the Ramsden Estates office, through Edwardian free-style to the Moderne of the Cooperative extension. What unifies these is their materiality and to an extent massing, with common building lines and a grid plan. The addition to the George reflects and compliments this with scale, materiality and form picking up on surrounding details and forms.

The roofscape is a product of the need to service the hotel. A detailed services strategy has reduced rooftop plant to a minimum, reducing the rooftop plant enclosures to a minimum and reducing bulk. The stonework to the elevations is stepped, allowing a reduced height plant enclosure when viewed directly from the railway and a recessed glazed elevation when viewed obliquely from street level on John William Street.

The Role of the Conservation Management Plan

We agree that a Conservation Management Plan is instrumental in mitigating harm to a heritage building, and have addressed this in considering significance and impact during this application. We consider the examples given by the Society including the treatment of the elegant main stairs, understanding of historic plan form of the original hotel and removal of C20th material demonstrate the appropriateness of our approach

This is supported by Historic England who comment (20 June) that:

'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.'

Our proposals have been based on a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the building and have responded to findings, not previously recorded, but apparent on opening up.

Applicant Summary (To The Victorian Society)

CONCLUSION

- The Society still maintains an objection to part of the proposed works, considering the proposed nor conservation area.

We disagree, considering the scale and materiality to be complimentary, forming a gateway building on the approach to the conservation area from the north, whilst sitting behind the mass of the original building when viewed from the conservation area to the south. We note that this is a position also held by other Statutory Consulting Conservation Parties with relevant correspondence to this effect having been supplied to the society.

- The society have raised in particular notes around Conservation Architect lead and project involvement which appears to be intimating a lack in some way in this regard.

The design team for the project includes Richard Storah, conservation architect who is actively involved in the proposals and leading on the preservation and restoration of Wallen's 1849 block and other parts of the Building having been a key attendee and contributor to all key site investigations and design team meetings.

- The Society suggest that should the Planning Authority be minded to approve the proposals, the treatment of the historic interiors should be strictly conditioned to mitigate harm to the historic fabric and significance of the listed building.

The proposal has been revised both to ensure viability and deliverability of the project to ensure the hotel remains in its optimum viable use, and to ensure the conservation and retention of the significant historic fabric, volumes and circulation patterns within Wallen's 1849 block A, hence this resubmission for LBC. The application contains a thorough assessment of significance, heritage impact assessment & detailed drawings recording elements of significance to guide the potential future works and as a body of works comprise a Conservation Management Plan in all but name.

It is also noted that this detailed recording and management approach encompassed within the application would if approved include a standard condition to perform the works in accordance with the drawings and supplied information and as such we do not feel that further conditions in respect of the interiors works would in any way enhance protection and could frustrate the works without due cause.

We conclude with the statement that The George Hotel is a significant part of Huddersfield's local heritage and something we are keen to see protected and conserved for future the benefit of the town. The Lead Conservation Architect, Project Architect and Building Surveyors leading the project are all Local to the area (AHR Are a Huddersfield Based Practice) and as such have an enhanced level of interest and duty to the Hotel and its future which we sincerely hope the level of application detail supplied thus far and evidenced engagement reflects.

Richard Storah
RIBA AABC SCA IHBC
Architect, Conservation Architect, Director

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