Consultation Response from KC, Conservation & Design
2025/91147 George Hotel, St George's Square, Huddersfield, HD1 1JA
Refurbishment and redevelopment of the George Hotel (including partial demolition, partial reconstruction and extension) to provide a 108-bedroom hotel with bar, restaurant, gym, conference facilities and ancillary facilities (Listed Buildng and within a Conservation Area)
Date Responded: 3/9/25 Responding Officer: SC Responding Ref:

The George Hotel is a substantial Grade II* listed building designed in 1849-50 by the architects William Wallen of London and Charles Child of Todmorden. The main building which faces St George's Square is 4 storeys high with attic rooms set within a slate mansard roof. The 3-storey wing facing John William Street elevation is simpler in design, although it follows a similar theme to the main façade. The north-west service wing located at an angle towards one side of the Station is a later addition constructed in coursed hammer-dressed stonework with top-hung casement windows, a flat roof, and a tall stone chimney.

The building is situated in a prominent location within the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area and makes a significant contribution. It faces St George's Square where all the surrounding buildings are listed, including the Grade I listed Huddersfield Railway Station, and the Grade II* Lion Chambers and Britannia Buildings.

The current proposal is for 108 bedroom hotel, 70 cover restaurant, 3 function rooms and associated facilities considered necessary for a modern viable hotel.

The George Hotel has had the following directly relevant Listed Building Consent applications approved;

2023/90112 – partial demolition to facilitate refurbishment and extension to form 90+ room hotel with bar, restaurant, gym, conference room.

2021/94596 – repairs to external façade with window replacements and re-roofing.

2019/91506 – partial change of use to 50 apart-hotel rooms, restaurant, café, function room, bar, museum, spa, storage.

2014/90693 – roof top coffee shop/diner and balustrade, canopies, internal and external alterations (30 bed hotel, 11 apartments).

As well as being architecturally impressive, the building holds a high degree of social and historic significance. The building is the location where the Rugby Football League was signed which further elevates its significance and values.

A detailed listing assessment was undertaken by Historic England in 2022 which further improved our understanding of the significance of the building. Elements which were not considered to be of special architectural or historic interest were excluded from the listing. Notably, because of this review, the northwest wing and the west end of the ballroom were specifically excluded from the listing. The central ballroom, owing to the high level of alteration and loss of the sprung floor was noted as not being of special interest.

The building has been vacant since 2010. Conservation works to the external envelope of the building were granted consent in 2021 and subsequently undertaken. Internally, there is a reasonable degree of surviving fabric, and the planform largely remains, however, in some areas, there has been a significant degree of intervention which has resulted in some areas in the total loss of plasterwork, skirting boards, ceilings and cornice details and other historic fabric.

Of the surviving historic fabric, there is much that dates from the 1930s, a key phase of development and change for the building. There are some sections of fabric which are extant from the first phase of development. One of these notable areas is on the first floor in Block A which was known as the

Commercial Room (or Signing Room), and which is a highly ornate room with decorative plasterwork detail and pedimented doorcases.

It is considered that the special interest is in the architectural merit but also from its evolution as a hotel, which has continually adapted to ensure its long-term survival in its original intended use. This is clearly evidenced in the various phases of development of the building which have secured its continued viability.

The supporting Assessment of Significance, Heritage Impact Assessment and associated plans provide detailed assessment of the building, outlining the phases of development and provides a comment on the areas of high and low significance.

Structural reports have been submitted which set out the key structural concerns for the building and justification for demolition and rebuilding required at the façade of John William Street elevation.

Proposals Blocks B and C

The proposals involve a high degree of demolition, which includes the northwest wing, Block B, the central ball room and demolition and rebuilding of the façade of the eastern wing to John William Street (Block C). As set out in the list entry for The George, the north-west wing has been specifically excluded from the listing, owing to its lack of special interest and significance. The Assessment of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment shows that the existing northwest wing, Block B is a later addition and replaced an earlier service wing. There are structural concerns with this section of the building, which would require substantial engineering work amounting to significant intervention. It is therefore considered acceptable for Block B to be demolished.

The eastern wing, Block C, fronting John William Street is to be taken down block by block, numbered and the facade rebuilt to match existing but with some very minor amendments to fenestration (1 window) for functional reasons (structural reports and justifications have been submitted and reviewed by Historic England). The upper floors of the wing have seen a higher degree of alteration and do not retain many historic details or features. There is evidence of significant works undertaken in the late 20th century and more recently under previous consents contributing to its dilution of interest.

There are structural concerns relating to this element of the building. This appears to be as a result of works which were undertaken during its construction, later alterations, and subsequent poor and inappropriate repairs. Consideration was given previously to the retention of this wing, but this approach was discounted owing to the identified structural concerns, safety issues during construction and level of intervention that would be required to the historic structure requiring re-building. There is a suggestion that some of the timbers are more recent 20th-century additions as the timbers appear to be machine sawn and of softwood.

There are concerns in respect of floor levels. Due to the nature of its construction, the floor levels are varied and present complexities of retention and reuse and aspiring to meet accessibility standards as it would result in uneven floor plates, creating a restricted level access. Structural justifications and reports have been submitted and detail the work which would be required to make the structure safe, which would require a high degree of intervention. Alterations are considered necessary to make the scheme economically/commercially viable to deal with internal complexities to meet building regulations for its continued public use.

Previously information was submitted which addressed the viability concerns and demonstrated that to make the scheme viable additional space is required.

The building is suffering from severe structural defects which have worsened and current structural justification has been submitted for the proposed approach in this case.

Information and justification submitted is summarised below.

John William Street wall – deconstruct & reconstruct

- The previous scheme accepted façade retention, with loss of some historic fabric behind (HE had excluded central ballroom from listing in 2022).
- Required underpinning & anchors has risks, 2-year road narrowing, frame deflection of 25mm under wind load could not be designed out.
- Ramboll structural condition survey 2021 identified water ingress to top of JWSt wall & throughout – can't be modified without risk to operatives & further harm
- Alterations in upper levels of Block C – caused deflection/stabilisation concerns.
- Current Application – Deflection has increased to 64mm at first floor level. JWSt wall recedes in thickness as it rises, there is bellowing at higher/thinner sections, slumping of washed fines. Block C West wall movement exacerbates concerns.
- No design could demonstrate safe or practical stabilisation by operatives, and further risk to heritage fabric.
- Through-bolting likely to be required exacerbating risk of harm with retention. JWSt wall is inter-connected with structure behind, degraded iron beam work over kitchen and Block A where uncontrolled movement could lead to unexpected consequential impact to fabric.
- Retention would be untenable and uninsurable risk, basement underpinning could not be done in a safe sequence, risk to operators.
- Conclusion - Deconstruction and reconstruction in a controlled manner is the only feasible approach remaining. This has been accepted by Historic England.

External Design

There has been considerable engagement and discussion during the design evolution of the new build scheme. Concerns were raised in respect of elements of earlier designs and amendments addressed those.

The design has focused on following the footprint of the existing building and follows some of the historic precedents. The design evolution is in response to the proposed functionality of the building to ensure its continued use as a hotel and to meet the necessary modern fire, accessibility and safety standards. It is understood that new additions/extensions to the original building are necessary to continue in its original use, and the new blocks can be viewed as a contemporary interpretation of past phases of extension/alteration. Objections state the new design does not reflect 'Huddersfield' or 'maintain a strong sense of place'. The new extension retains links to the George by lining the fenestration horizontally and vertically, with some breaks to provide variation. The roof line is contemporary and subservient. Overall, it is considered that the design is coherent, polite and allows the original historic building to command respect from the main public realm space. The materiality and detailing are important to its overall success and sensitive integration with The George itself. The proposed materials using a good quality natural local stone will be conditioned to help assimilate it into the local distinctive character of the area. The form and design are a contemporary interpretation, will be subservient and ancillary to the main frontage of George Hotel and hope to improve on the existing and previously approved proposals. The use of a glazed link is a method to join historic and new

buildings, and amendments have been made to address concerns where it joins to the George.

The corner of John William Street has been bookended, to make a clear visual break. It also takes cues from the surrounding character of the Conservation Area, where there are several examples of such architectural features and where corners are chamfered, to soften an otherwise sharp corner detail.

The new east elevation shows a contemporary design reflecting the floor/window patterns which generally reduce in grandeur with height. The design enhances the existing functional wing which currently displays unsightly services. Provided the materials and details are of high quality it is appropriate.

The additional mansard/ dormer structures to the roof line have been stepped back and use contrasting clearly contemporary materials to try and reduce the impact of the massing and break up the elevation. The roof extension is tall but lower than the original mansard roof of Block A (and the chimneys). Following negotiations the height of the extension has been reduced and design altered.

External Doors – see details submitted 8/7/25
Bar & John William Street – propose slim steel/glass doors divided into 8 panels –An alternative that would be preferred is to have a solid external door that can be left open during opening hours then a glazed internal door (if there is enough space).
Conference room – Option to re-use 6 panel solid timber door from bar – if the door cannot be used at the bar, then retention/relocation to the Conference room would be acceptable.

BLOCK A-Internal Works
Within Block A, the earliest building, the historic stairwell is proposed to be retained with minor alterations, but this is subject to further investigation regarding structural issues. This will preserve, enhance and better reveal the space which is welcomed.

The proposals intend the reinstatement of the historic plan form of the building, which had previously been lost. Nib walls and down-stands will be retained to allow appreciation and legibility of the historic plan form.

All existing floors in Block A would be retained giving a reduction in harm compared to the previous scheme.

Full level 2 historic recording has been undertaken and more to be completed prior to works.

While there is to be some intervention in block A, we do consider that overall, the works are necessary and justified to secure the future viable re-use of this important heritage asset as a hotel.

Four areas of highest significance in Block A will receive enhanced levels of conservation including Signing Room, former Dining Room (1st floor), Billiards Room (Conference Room ground floor and the Main Stair. The following areas also need careful and sensitive treatment including Main Entrance/Reception/Lobby and Bar.

Summary of Internal Works Proposed

Commercial Room/Signing Room Ceiling
The most significant 1874 decorative plaster ceiling of the Commercial Room will be retained which is a preferable approach to previous schemes. The current scheme proposes fewer interventions to this significant room, so all details and decoration can be retained without requiring demolition within or on upper floors which is welcomed.

Original features to be refurbished/painted, colours TBC. New flat panel radiators, pipework in floor (discreet). New LVT floor loose-lay to protect original floorboards (repair where required).
New lighting proposed.

Reception – original fireplace, staircase and curved display cabinet retention is welcomed. Internal volumes and layout will reflect the 1851 planform with down stand beams to inform understanding. The 20th Century 1970's/1980's (low quality) alterations including coffered ceiling at the base of the stair will be removed to allow better understanding of the 1850's spaces. It is understood that there are 2 layers of decorative plasterwork existing; a higher level of circa 1930's plaster, with a lower level of 1970s/80s. Due to fire strategy compartmentation requirements, the plaster will need to be removed, but the intention is to reinstate the higher-level plasterwork to match the existing pattern.
Window architraves, panelling and shutters shall be retained by conditions.

Treatment of columns – the scagliola columns will be replicated to ensure they would be fire compliant. Oval 1930's window to be retained. Skirting boards and cornicing to be retained.

Bar – existing cornice decorated. New decorative mouldings in ceiling proposed (8.3 D&A). Restore and/or replace picture rail/ dado/ skirting. Propose 4-panel doors. Final design subject to ceiling height confirmation.

Conference rooms ground floor – redecorate existing cornice, plus new at divider. Architraves, window panels, reveals, door surrounds, skirting – retain and redecorate. Altered location for ceiling roses (existing 1930's-70s).
Window shutters – retain.

First & Second Floor Corridors (8.5 D&A) – Various original features survive to be refurbished/reinstated/painted (colour TBC) – door surrounds, dado, cornices, ceiling panelling, arches with decorative corbels, skirting, panelled doors to be reinstated. Metal mesh ceiling rafts across full width contain all M&E (proposed image submitted 8/7/25). Although this is a contemporary feature, it is a method of dealing with the need to provide services while retaining historic features, as it is reversible it is considered acceptable.

Staircase – design awaits further engineer research. Cornice, picture rail/dado/skirting/4 panel doors/architraves/column/capitals – to be decorated. Further detail awaited on glazed balustrade requirements for Health and Safety – details to be agreed by condition.

First Floor Former dining room – the original layout of the original dining room has been lost due to later bedroom insertion. The bay window ceiling decoration, timber panelling and skirting in one bedroom will be retained and the intention is to reinstate more of the plasterwork in that bedroom where practicable.

Door schedule – identifies a limited number (3) of historic panel doors to be retained (others are late

20th century fire doors).

Summary of Improvements

Various improvements have been proposed from previous schemes which are welcomed.

1. Ventilation MVHR utilises existing chimneys.
2. Rooftop plant mass to move inwards to centre/reduced/set back.
3. Retention of existing floors (and some ceilings – Signing Room, part former dining room, circulation corridors first floor) where possible in Block A.
4. Signing room – retain most original decoration/features.

In conclusion, there is some less than substantial harm of a moderate to low level, but as the building has been vacant for over 15 years, it is considered that the proposals are justified and outweighed by the public benefit of securing the optimum viable long term original use as hotel to this Grade II* Listed Building, allowing public access and regeneration to the town centre.

Brief Summary of Recommended conditions

1. Archaeological recording including elements to be removed to enable interpretation and understanding and later reinstatement if desired.
2. Staircase structural information to be submitted.
3. Details of glazed balustrade and handrail to be submitted and agreed.
4. Protection measures – Signing room. Full details to be submitted, before works to this room commence.
5. Window detail for John William St.
6. External materials and details for new extensions.

Kirklees COUNCIL