

Ref.: TC/1871

11 December 2024

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By e-mail: planning@oldham.gov.uk

Application: FUL/353585/24

Site: 53 - 55 King Street Oldham OL8 1EU

Proposal: Demolition of former Snooker Club and erection of a six, nine and eleven storey residential development with ground floor car parking and commercial space.

Remit:

Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

Facebook @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

Trustees James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

Comment:

This application has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking the total loss of the former Grand Theatre and Opera House and replacement with a new residential development.

The Grand first opened in 1908. Its exterior is built with terracotta and brick with a corner entrance with clock tower added in 1936. It was the most prestigious theatre in Oldham with an interior described as 'elaborate' and a 45 foot stage equipped with an orchestra pit. It was remodelled in 1937 when it was taken on by Gaumont Super Cinemas. After the cinema closed in 1961 it reverted to live use under a new name, the Astoria, hosting famous names including The Beatles. It was then converted to a bowling alley and in 1973 it became a nightclub with a pool club in the former foyer. After a period of closure it was converted to a roller derby centre called the Thunderdome for the Rainy City team. The team was forced to vacate in 2020 and the building has been vacant since that time.

As we have noted previously, it is regretful that there appears to have been no attempt to find a compatible re-use for this building particularly as its previous uses have been for social and cultural functions. The building is considered a non-designated heritage asset which positively contributes to local character and townscape with distinctive features. Paragraph 209 of the NPPF (2023) seeks the effect on the significance of non-designated heritage assets to be taken into account in determining applications. The applicant has provided little appraisal of this building.

Neither does there seem to have been any attempt to retain as much fabric as possible and adapt the building for alternative use. Demolition and re-development is not the optimum approach from an environmental sustainability perspective. Paragraph 157 of the NPPF encourages the planning system to support the transition to a low carbon future including encouraging the re-use and conversion of existing buildings. This proposal conflicts with that objective.

We strongly encourage an alternative design approach to be sought which would retain as much of the original fabric and features of interest as possible. This could provide a better outcome for the town in heritage and sustainability terms.

We also urge that a programme of historic building recording is undertaken prior to demolition as a planning condition to document any remaining features of historic interest and significance which might remain.

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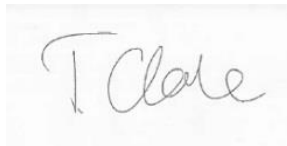
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We do not support this application in its current form, unless evidence is provided that retention and re-use of the existing building either in full or part cannot be made possible.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss this representation in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697