

SUBJECT: Otley Civic Centre – Public Consultation and Responses

1.0 Public Consultation

- 1.1 In consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning, Public, public consultation was undertaken by City Development on the proposal to recommend that Otley Civic Centre be disposed of for residential conversion.
- 1.2 An email was issued to the Otley and Yeadon Ward Members, Chair of Otley Town Council and Leeds North West MP Alex Sobel. The email invited these consultees to issue it to any interested party. The content of the email is copied below.
- 1.3 Text of public consultation email issued on 25 May 2018, with responses being invited by 18 June 2018.
- 1.4 Dear Consultee

Following the invitation for expressions of interest and the consideration of submissions put forward by interested parties, please note that Leeds City Council is considering the sale of Otley Civic Centre for conversion to residential apartments. Before we finalise our position and recommend the sale for approval your comments on the proposal are welcome so they can be considered.

It is proposed the sale will be to Mandale Homes, who intend to convert the building to 21 new homes. Initial proposals are that fourteen apartments will have one bedroom each ranging in size from 470sqft to 805sqft, and seven apartments will have two bedrooms each ranging in size from 750sqft to 960sqft. A plan is attached showing the possible layout of the apartments. Mandale will provide the 35% policy compliant number of affordable units in the property. Seven new affordable homes will be provided, and management of these units will be agreed between parties at a more advanced stage. Mandale wishes to secure planning permission and listed building consent prior to completing the acquisition.

The long term preservation of the building is important and conversion to residential use will guarantee this and bring the property back into sustainable use by providing new homes in Otley. It is proposed the City Council will grant a long lease to Mandale containing development obligations to undertake the conversion works. Should the works not be completed satisfactorily or Mandale default and fail to complete the works then the lease will be terminated and the building returned to the City Council. It is expected Mandale will complete the conversion and the City Council will then transfer its freehold interest to the company. The long term future of the building will be

guaranteed as the owners of the new apartments will seek assurances from Mandale that future management and maintenance regimes are in place before acquiring and are unlikely to proceed without these being in place. Mandale and the future apartment owners will be making substantial financial investments in the property which they will wish to preserve.

Mandale has a proven track record of converting Listed buildings and successfully completing other development projects. In 2017 one development was recognised for its outstanding quality and was shortlisted for the Best Development prize at the 2017 UK Property Awards. Mandale has been the winner of the Best Residential Development in Yorkshire and the Humber award. Mandale also won two UK Property Awards in 2013; Residential Development (multiple units) for South Yorkshire, and Interior Design (Show Home) for Yorkshire and the Humber. The company developed Claro Mews and Wharfe Court in Otley, and has just commenced construction of 70 new 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses at Dock Lane, Shipley. The City Council is confident Mandale will successfully refurbish Otley Civic Centre.

Please feel free to share the information in this email to others you feel may like to comment. Responses by 18 June 2018 are welcomed so that we can finalise our recommendation for a decision.

2.0 Response to Public Consultation

2.1 Eleven responses were received, eight objecting and three supporting (although accompanied by concerns). All responses are detailed below.

Date	Name	Position
01.06.18 and 15.06.18 Objection	Member of the public	Resident and member of Otley Community Land Trust (formed a year ago)
<p>Comments - 01.06.18 - Who owns the building? Current position? LCC's goals: make money or renovate and return to use? Otley CLT could develop a vision and plan for community refurbishment and management of Civic.</p> <p>15.06.18 - I am a member of Otley Community Land Trust which was formed just over a year ago. A small group, very well organised and membership is growing. Given more time there may have been a case for the CLT to develop a vision and plan for community refurbishment and management of the civic centre. Many in Otley would like the building to be used and run by the community. But we have run out of time to prepare a case.</p>		
03.06.18 Support	Member of the public	Resident
<p>Comments - "Just do it" best thing to sell for apartments. Leave front intact. Housing is needed, and even better if some can be truly affordable.</p>		
13.06.18 Objection	Member of the public	Resident
<p>Comments - Objects strongly. Only major public venue, closure has left large hole in community life. No viable alternative. Courthouse has narrow range and small</p>		

auditorium ruling out larger acts, so don't come to Otley. Courthouse won't be expanded unless LCC gifts the land and HLF grant is awarded. Closure of Korks music venue seriously threatens Otley's role as a local music hub and threatens its evolution from market/industrial town to a place with strong cultural and tourist attractions to a soulless commuter town. Not consistent with the aspirations of the draft Otley Neighbourhood Plan. Important to retain front, main hall and side rooms. Rear can be redeveloped. Many LCC services have been lost, growing estrangement and antipathy towards Leeds. How can LCC justify sale when Yeadon, Wetherby and Morley have town hall cultural facilities? Don't need windfall development at cost of losing valuable irreplaceable cultural assets. Some flats could cross subsidise. LCC could cover cost of redevelopment through sale of North Parade. If LCC sells a 'solemn commitment' needed to deliver a similar sized cultural facility needed when the town is growing.

14.06.18 Support	Member of the public	Resident
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Comments - 'In perfect agreement' with proposal, subject to: money raised returned to Otley for new facilities including meeting rooms, space for cultural activities (expansion of Courthouse). 2010/11 North Parade had been suggested to fund Civic Centre, so same in reverse, and expand cultural offer in Otley. Courthouse is limited due to size. Adequate parking needed (underground?). Façade should be maintained.

14.06.18 Objection	Member of the public	Resident
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Comments - Apartments won't preserve the building for the people of Otley (*misquoted LCC consultation email*). Move 'council rooms' back to Civic, library, Old People's Action Group to the Civic would have considerable savings. LCC benefitting by Otley providing 500 homes and a brown field site for further housing. What proportion of the LCC commitment to new housing has Otley provided? LCC should offer locals a few months to raise money and return this much loved building to the people. LCC gets a bad press, work to improve the relationship.

16.06.18 Objection	Cllr Colin Campbell	Ward Member
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Comments – "As I said I do not believe you can look at this in isolation. The City Council has sold significant assets in Otley and proposes to sell more (Civic Centre, North Parade, Ashfield Works, housing land to the east of Otley). In return Otley has received little community investment. The sale of some or all these sites should produce a significant investment in Otley.

If we are dealing with just the site of the Civic Centre I cannot support a sale unless all the capital receipts are returned to Otley."

17.06.18 Support	Member of the public	Resident
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Comments - In favour of any plans to preserve. Grave concerns impact on traffic and parking. Estimate 18-40 cars. Streets and car parks already full. Could cause obstructions. Supports development of homes and preservation but adequate parking is needed.

17.06.18 Objection	Member of the public	Resident writing to Tom Riordan
<p>Comments - "More thought is required. In your previous role at YF, you might have considered if alternative uses would bring greater prosperity to an area. I think this is the case for the Civic Centre where further flats will add nothing either to the economy nor any aspect of community capacity building.</p> <p>Otley has a positive reputation for music making, producing new musicians and for a sound reputation within the whole of the UK for traditional music. The small and volunteer run Otley Courthouse does very well and could be considered as a pilot project for something more ambitious, demonstrating continuing vibrancy and interest from both the public and local supporters alike.</p> <p>I visited Gateshead/Newcastle and was the guest of the excellent Sage Centre. Aside from its auditoria it is also the base for traditional music in the area. It is very successful and has produced a great number of new musicians who earn a living through their performances. The size of the Civic Centre would permit bigger audiences than the Courthouse as well as other possibilities such as recordings and video productions.</p> <p>What has been done at the Sage is to make traditional music a "cool thing". Young people throughout the North East now take up music in schools and outside, and this is well known to help very much with improvements in education attainment and personal development. This is a very powerful tool that is available and no doubt there are a number of additional benefit streams that could be identified and developed.</p> <p>This is the sort of engagement that I think we could achieve using Otley Civic Centre as the base. The essentials are already in place so it is not a wholly fresh start up. I think such a proposal might be eligible for support from one or other of the Lottery Streams, too, and like the Sage Centre be developed into something that is self supporting. There is nothing similar in the area and it can link to the Leeds College of Music for additional student support and further development.</p> <p>Could I encourage you to look at this a little more? I think we can do more for Leeds and Otley.</p> <p>(ps, as for myself, I have developed ideas better to understand how buildings are actually used, in real time. These have been taken up by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and are known as BRE OptiSuite. LCC has been the pilot study, under (a free) contract, and the results are truly eye popping)."</p>		
18.06.18	Cllr Sandy Lay	Ward Member
<p>Comments - "I fully intended to provide my response today to the proposal, unfortunately I have been called into work so will not be able. Please expect a response from me in the next day or two." See below comments received 20.06.18.</p>		
18.06.18 Not in favour	Cllr Ryk Downes	Ward Member
<p>Comments - "Whilst I am not in favour of losing a community facility, if the sale goes</p>		

ahead, I would like to see any money from the sale can be used to help reprovide the lost facility in Otley.”

**18.06.18
Objection**

**Cllr Ray
Georgeson**

Chair Otley Town Council

Comments - “You have provided an opportunity for Otley residents to comment on the proposal from Leeds City Council to sell the former Mechanics Institute (Civic Centre) building for residential conversion into apartments. This is my formal response to your consultation process.

It remains deeply regretful that the neglect of this building and lack of investment by the City Council over many years has left the building in a poor condition which restricts the options available for its re-purposing.

This situation, combined with the various other asset sales Leeds City Council is engaged in (such as North Parade, Ashfield Works, land East of Otley), leaves our community remaining aggrieved that no obvious reinvestment has been earmarked for Otley with any of the capital receipts that continue to drain out of our town.

As a bare minimum, we are reasonably entitled to expect and demand that the capital receipts from the sale of the former Mechanics Institute be re-invested in community investments in Otley and that you facilitate this in conjunction with Otley Town Council and Ward Councillors.”

**20.06.18
Objection**

Cllr Sandy Lay

Ward Members

Comments - “I am writing to you in my capacity as one of the city councillors representing Otley and with regard to the proposed sale of Otley Civic Centre.

I should state that I seem to have many more ‘objections’ than my colleagues and at the last count I believe it to be fourteen against and three for the proposal.

Whilst I thank you for all the time we have spent discussing the Civic Centre of the last six years I hope you will agree I have never been at ease with this proposal. Indeed, there have been times when I have stated that converting the Civic into flats were a ‘red line’ for me. My view has not changed and therefore at this time and for the following reasons I cannot support this proposal.

1. Otley will be left with no civic building. It is my view that all major outlying settlements should have at least one civic building. Communities like Otley across the city deserve no less. Many communities like Morley, Pudsey (which has two!), Rothwell, Wetherby and Yeadon have such facilities and I see no reason why Otley should be treated differently.
2. Austerity is no reason to sell off the town's 'silver'. As custodians it is our role to secure the future of public buildings not sell them off to the highest bidder. Bringing the Civic Centre back into use, funded by the City Council would secure its future. Following renovation a Community Asset Transfer to a community organisation like ‘Give Otley a Town Hall’ or a similar – as yet unidentified – group could take over the day to day running of the renovated building. It is the enormity of the renovation that curtails any community involvement at this

stage rather than no desire to see the building back in public/third sector community use.

3. Accordingly having no money will not wash. There is plenty of money when it suits - £13.5m for the Merrion Building, £4.4m for West Yorkshire Playhouse, £5m for the Town Hall, money for an abandoned city centre hotel and the - now discredited - grant of £4m to Yorkshire Cricket. Let me be clear this is a choice made by the council and not one based on financial need. I am aware that the council at any one time has a £200m 'working' capital fund so this is not about money, it is about Leeds abandoning communities like mine and expecting us to commute into and around the city for our facilities.
4. I have always been clear that I would not agree to such a proposal until replacement halls and spaces had been agreed and 'locked down'. I am not aware that this has taken place. The loss of the Civic Centre will leave the town woefully short of 'public owned' indoor spaces.
5. It is my view that Leeds has done very little to support a community led project. In fact it has done nothing to find nor support anyone other than the developer. No meaningful consultation with the community took place. Asking for an 'expressions of interest' when dealing with a community group like 'Give Otley a Town Hall' is neither helpful nor supportive. As I state earlier were the council to renovate the building I can see no reason why a community group(s) would not pick up the day to day running.
6. This is just one of the many assets that the city is currently stripping out of the town. The former Unitary District Council gone, Ashfield Works going, North Parade going, Otley Civic Centre going and for what? No investment in Otley, no money coming back to Otley, no public owned community spaces for Otley.
7. As assets are striped it becomes clearer that this council cares not one iota for this town's identity, its history nor its independence. As the city hurtles towards centralisation those of us who care for smaller, distinct communities like Otley are left understanding why there is such political discourse. Stripping of community assets and using the money to centralise isn't the answer. In a rapidly changing world a commitment to support devolution, whilst divesting of centralisation and re-investing in local communities are what will drive rejuvenation, well-being and 'place making' now and into the future.

So in conclusion and for the reasons outlined above I wish to oppose the proposal as outlined in your email."