

Proposal

The Council's Events Officers seek consent for the temporary use of parts of the pedestrianized areas of Oxford Street, Victoria Square and Newport Street as this year's "Winter Wonderland" – the regular Christmas event that seeks to ensure the attractiveness of Bolton town centre for shoppers. The affected parts of the pedestrianized highway would be closed for construction and dismantling between 21st November (when construction of the snow slide commences) and 8th Jan, when the ice rink is dismantled. The site would be operational and open to the public for use between 29th November and 4th January.

Members are advised that due to the scale and duration of this year's event it is now considered to fall within the definition of development and therefore to be subject to planning control.

The proposal would see the return of the 30 metre high Ferris wheel and a 255 square metre ice rink – 55 square metres bigger than last year - on Victoria Square together with a Santa's grotto. A new addition to the event would be a 5 metre high, 50 metre long snow slide sited on Newport Street. Lighting and fencing to the main attractions would also be provided.

The boundary of the application site includes areas of Oxford Street and Newport Street beyond the footprints of the main attractions in order to allow flexibility for ancillary attractions such as stalls or marquees, as required.

Site Characteristics

The site is the large civic space of Victoria Square together with parts of the pedestrianized access roads of Newport Street and Oxford Street. The site forms part of the core retail area of Bolton town centre and is dominated by the principal elevation of the Grade II* Listed Building of Bolton Town Hall. Victoria Square and Oxford Street fall within the Town Hall Conservation Area, though Newport Street is excluded from this.

The site has been used for Christmas events for some years, though perhaps not on this scale but clearly has a long history of hosting a number of civic, sporting and other events.

Policy

National Planning Policy Framework - Building a strong and competitive economy, ensuring the vitality of town centres, promoting sustainable transport, requiring good design, promoting healthy communities, conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Core Strategy Objectives

SO1 Access to Health, Sport, Recreation and Food, Walking and Cycling, SO3 Economic Opportunities of Bolton Town Centre, SO4 Transforming Bolton Town Centre, SO5 Bolton's Economy, SO6 Accessibility and Infrastructure, SO7 Waste, SO8 Minerals, SO9 Crime and Road Safety, SO11 Built Heritage, SO16 Community Cohesion and Access

Core Strategy Policies

P2 Retail, P5 Transport, S1 Crime and Road Safety, CG3 Design and the Built Environment, CG4 Compatible Uses, SC2 Cultural and Community Facilities
TC1 Civic Core, TC11 Design in Bolton Town Centre, LO1 Links

Supplementary Planning Documents

Building Bolton, Town Hall Conservation Area Character Study

Analysis

Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with policies in the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Applications which are not in accordance with Development Plan policies should be refused unless material considerations justify granting permission.

Similarly, proposals which accord with Development Plan policies should be approved unless there are material considerations which would justify a refusal of permission.

It is therefore necessary to decide whether this proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and then take account of other material considerations.

The main impacts of the proposal are:-

- * impact on the character and appearance of the area
- * impact on access, the highway network and pedestrian permeability
- * impact on the vitality and viability of Bolton town centre

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy SO11 of Bolton's Core Strategy is a strategic policy and seeks to conserve and enhance the best of Bolton's built heritage and landscapes, and improve the quality of open spaces and the design of new buildings. Core Strategy Policy CG3 seeks to ensure that development proposals display innovative, sustainable design that contributes to good urban design, respects and enhances local distinctiveness, and has regard to the overall built character and landscape quality of the area. Proposals should also be compatible with the surrounding area, in terms of scale, massing, grain, form, architecture, street enclosure, local materials and landscape treatment including hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment. Historical associations should be retained where possible.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a general duty on Local Planning Authorities that in the exercise of their powers with respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

The National Planning Policy Framework contains 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. One of these principles is that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

Core Strategy Policy CG3 seeks to ensure that development proposals conserve and enhance the heritage significance of heritage assets and heritage areas, recognising the importance of sites, areas and buildings of archaeological, historic, cultural and architectural interest and their settings.

Core Strategy Policy TC11 relates specifically to development in Bolton Town Centre and states that the council and its partners will protect, strengthen and enhance the distinctive townscape qualities of Bolton town centre. Development should conserve and enhance the special nature of the conservation areas and listed buildings.

The experience of previous years has demonstrated that the attractions are visually prominent in the streetscene – though clearly in this instance this is part of their value and is to be welcomed. Victoria Square, together with its ancillary connected areas, is a large and prominent public space and can accommodate these attractions on a temporary basis without harm to its character and appearance.

The event would be located away from the more residential areas of Bolton town centre and given the temporary nature and duration of operating hours can take place without harm to living conditions. The Council's Events Team and their contractors are experienced in delivering such attractions without harm to heritage or other elements of the public realm.

For the duration of the event, the proposal is considered to have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the area.

Impact on Access, the Highway Network and Pedestrian Permeability

Policy SO9 of Bolton's Core Strategy is a strategic objective and seeks to, amongst other things, improve road safety. Policy P5 seeks to ensure that new development takes into account accessibility, pedestrian prioritisation, public transport, servicing, parking and the transport needs of people with disabilities. Policy S1 seeks to promote road safety.

The Applicant has provided the following information in relation to these issues:-

Big Wheel

The Big wheel is built onto a raised deck to 600/650mm from ground height depending on terrain and so the access for the entrance is via 3 steps to the pay box and the queuing deck and then onto the ride gondolas.

The exit is then at the opposite end of the wheel's deck via a ramped egress. In situations where access is required for wheelchair users or less able persons that cannot use the steps, the exit ramp is also employed as an entrance and stewards assist the access to the queuing deck and ensure that free passage is possible to the gondola of the wheel.

Ice Rink

The Ice rink is built on raised decking to facilitate the necessary chiller distribution for the ice (ranging from 200mm to 850mm from ground level) and as such, employs the use of a two tiered ramp with landing to achieve this lift for both entrance to and egress from the skate exchange area. All entrances are designed to offer more than sufficient width for entry for wheelchair users or less mobile customers, and the decked area is a flat rubberized matting which offers good traction even on cold days with frost.

Snow Slide

The supplier of the snow slide has stated that their risk assessment concludes that anyone using this facility needs to be able to enter and alight the riding tubes under their own strength and ability for safety reasons. If there is a problem where the occupant leaves the tube, they

would need to be able to leave the slope without assistance, so this feature is not deemed suitable for less abled persons due to the physical nature of the attraction. Ice Aid, who will be staffing the attraction, have operated this facility in other towns and cities on this basis.

General

The site is built with full consideration for free movement around the attractions, where it is safe to do so; certain areas are fenced either permanently (because of moving parts or generators/chillers and pipework) or out of hours in order to secure the site and ensure public safety.

Consideration has been given to movement from one side of the site to the other; this has been carefully planned to eliminate potential trip hazards due to bottlenecks and/or trips and falls due to insufficient passageways or gradients, etc.

The accompanying site plans offer details of alternative routes around the site for general public not wishing to participate with the event, as well as showing safe passage through the site to each attraction for participants of the event attractions.

Officers conclude that experience has shown that such events can be delivered with due consideration for access and permeability. It is also noted that the Council's Highway Engineers do not raise objection. The proposal is considered to comply with Core Strategy Policies SO9, P5 and S1.

Impact on the Vitality and Viability of Bolton Town Centre

The National Planning Policy Framework contains 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. One of these principles is that planning should promote the vitality of our main urban areas,

The Core Strategy notes that Bolton town centre is the principal location for employment in the whole borough with an emphasis on retailing, offices and leisure; it is subject to considerable development pressure, and its role within the borough is a vital one. It goes on to state as an aim that Bolton town centre will continue to be a vibrant mix of uses and will be the principal location for retailing, leisure, cultural and civic activities.

Core Strategy TC1 is a spatial policy which relates specifically to Bolton Town Centre and states that the Council will continue to support the civic and retail core as the principal location in the borough for retailing and promote Victoria Square for leisure and civic activities. Ensuring that the whole of the civic and retail core is safe and attractive for pedestrians will be a priority

Policies SO3, SO4 and SO5 of Bolton's Core Strategy are strategic objectives within the "Prosperous Bolton" theme and seek to take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by Bolton town centre and ensure that these opportunities benefit everybody in Bolton, including those people living in the most deprived areas, together with creating a transformed and vibrant Bolton town centre and ensuring that Bolton takes full economic advantage of its location in the Greater Manchester City Region.

Officers note that Policy TC1 actively promotes Victoria Square for leisure and civic activities. Providing an attractive and competitive environment for festive shoppers during this paramount period for retailers is considered to be key to the continued success of Bolton town centre and

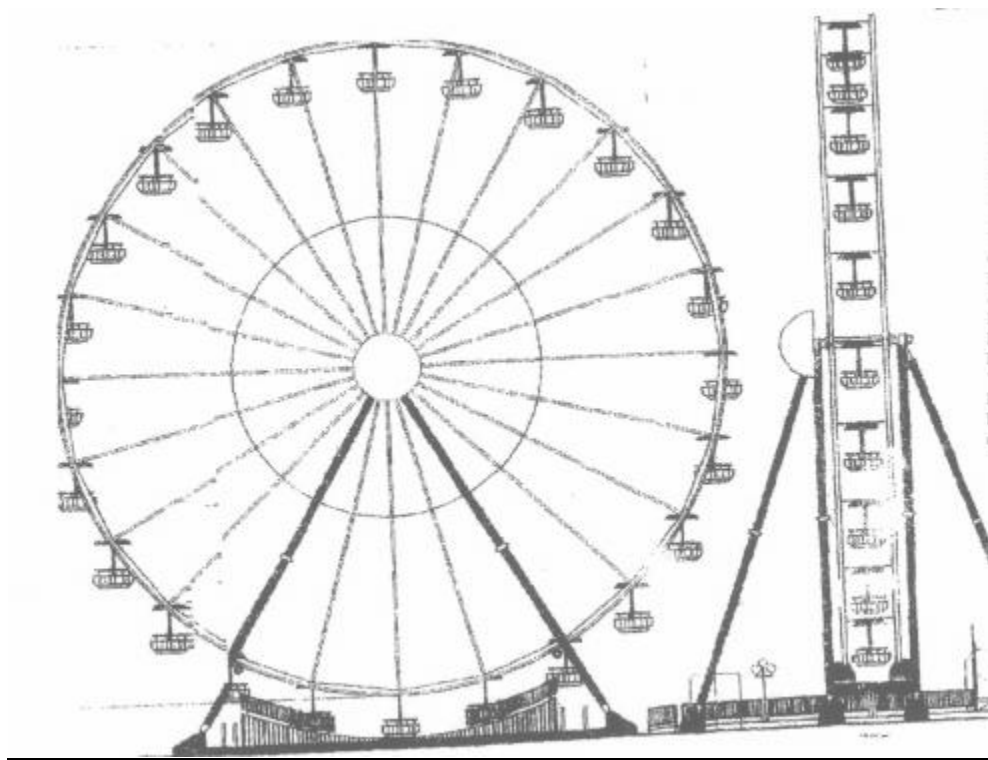
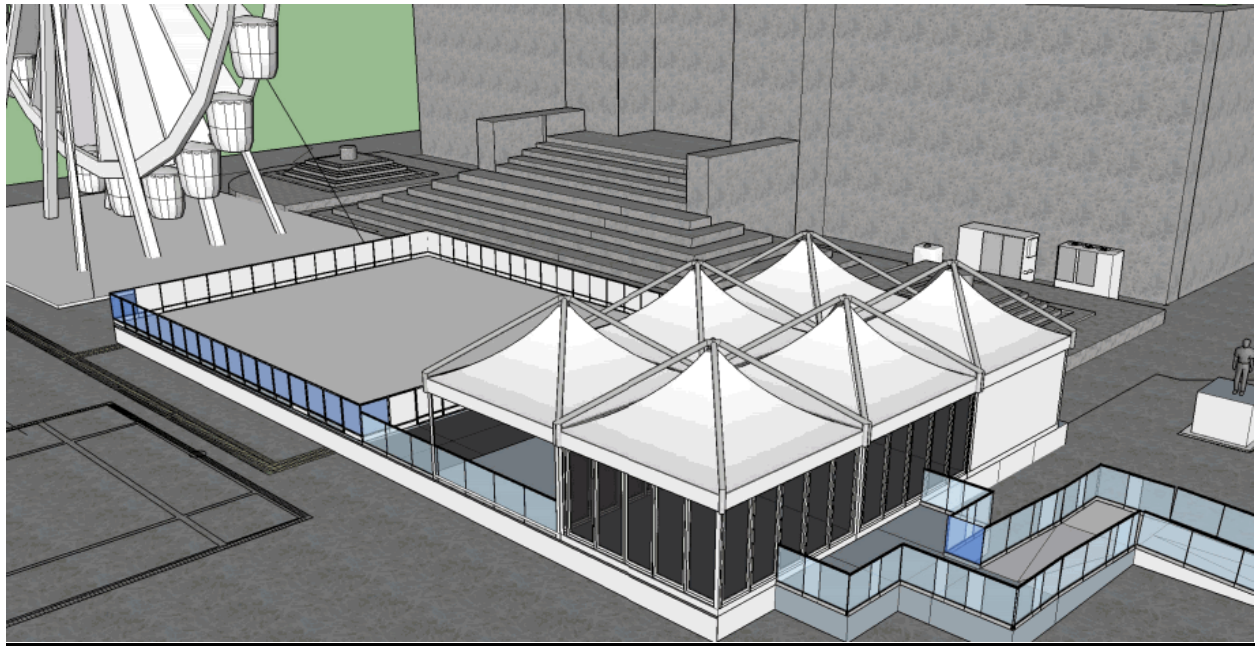
the proposed development is therefore considered to make a significant and positive contribution to vitality and viability.

Conclusion

The Winter Wonderland event is once again considered to be key to the success and competitiveness of this important period for town centre retailers and no harm has been identified to outweigh this.

Members are recommended to delegate the decision to the Director for an approval once the consultation period expires. No objections have been received to date and therefore the power to issue a delegated decision is requested, provided that no new planning issues are raised in any representations.





Representation and Consultation Annex

Representations

None

Consultations

Advice was sought from the following consultees: Highway Engineers, Town Centre Regeneration

Planning History

None relevant