

Our ref: hk/O/LL/Bwood/APC/05.09.25

5 November, 2025

Planning – Development Control
Hertsmere Council
Via Planning Portal

Dear Sir/Madam,

Proposed Change of Use from Class E (c) Financial and Professional Service Use to Sui Generis Adult Gaming Centre (AGC) at 58-60 Portland Street Manchester M1 4QT

Planning Policy Design and Heritage Statement

Introduction

We act as planning consultants to Luxury Leisure (part of the Novomatic Group), a market leading provider of gaming and entertainment venues with over 280 high street and seaside gaming venues in the UK. The Group employs over 3000 staff in the UK and accounts for 22.5% of the UK adult gaming centre market such that it is a highly experienced responsible operator in this market.

The company wishes to operate a new adult gaming centre (AGC) use from the above vacant premises. The subject property is the former Natwest Bank premises, which closed on 11th June 2025. The site is located on the corner of Portland Street and Nicholas Street and comprises basement, ground, mezzanine and first floor retail bank and office space over approximately 306sq. The subject proposal is for the principal of change of use of the ground floor only. There are also 10 existing air condenser units to the rear on Reyner Street. These are to be removed and replaced with two new air condenser units located on anti-vibration mounts. There are no changes proposed to the first floor and second floor accommodation which comprises ancillary office accommodation for the former bank use.

This application is simply to establish the principle of change of use together with the siting of two replacement air condenser units to the rear. The AGC will operate only at ground floor level. There are no external alterations proposed which constitute development as defined in

the T&C Planning Act 1990 in this application. An application for shopfront alterations, and advertisement consent will be submitted under separate cover.

Heritage Assessment

Portland Street runs from Piccadilly at its junction with Newton Street south-westwards to Oxford Street at its junction with Chepstow Street. There are a number of listed buildings on Portland Street, the nearest being No.70.72 on the other side of Nicholas Street. Portland Street is also located in the George Street Conservation Area. The subject premises is not statutorily or locally listed, and the subject proposal does not impact the setting of any listed building.

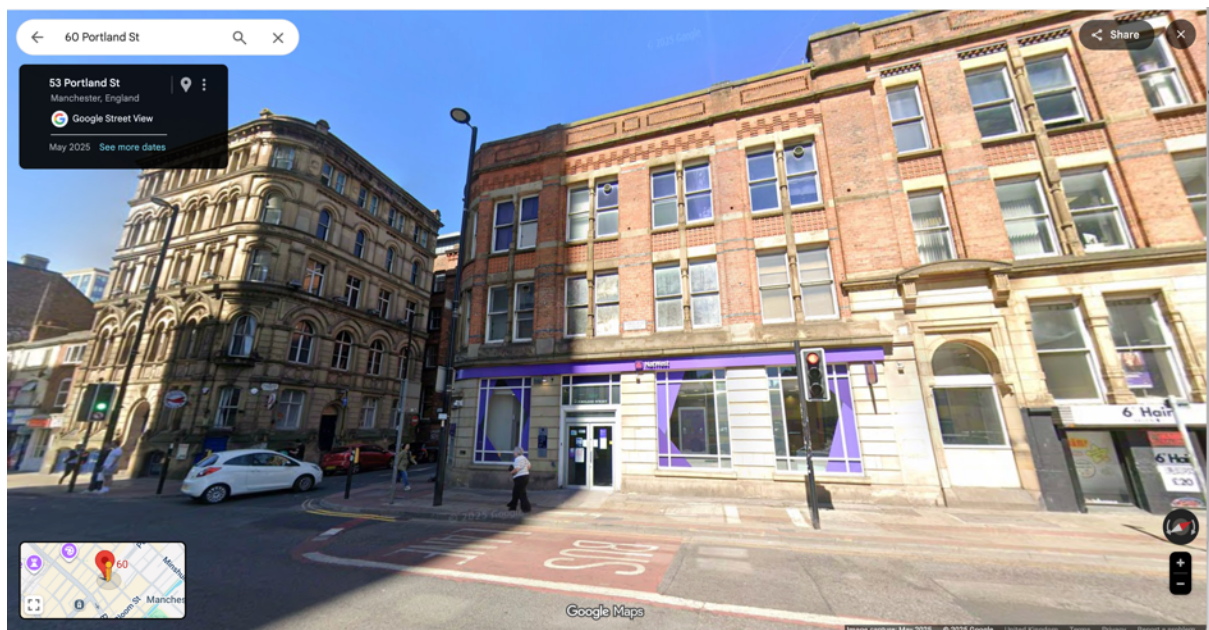


Figure 1 – Former Natwest Bank 58-60 Portland Street – Google Street View



Figure 2 - Former Natwest Bank 58-60 Portland Street – Google Street View

Reyner Street to the rear of the premises is wholly utilitarian with many air condenser units on rear elevations, extraction flues and refuse bins from neighbouring properties being placed on the street.



Figure 3 - Former Natwest Bank 58-60 Portland Street Reyner Street Elevation – 10No. Ac units to be removed

The application site has a modern appearance as a long-established commercial bank with large picture windows and level accessed double entrance doors. The shopfront previously featured ATM's and digital screens as well as other fixtures and fittings associated with the bank use. Planning permission 142537/FO/2025 - External alterations to make good facade following removal of various fixtures and fittings was submitted by Natwest Bank on 26 March 2025 and approved on 19 May 2025. These works are to be undertaken by the landlord. Figure 4 below show the approved external works.



Figure 4 - 142537/FO/2025 – Approved Plan - External alterations to make good facade following removal of various fixtures and fittings (not to scale).

There is a long planning history of illuminated signage, with the most recent being in 2022, being approved at this site as follows -

- External alterations to make good facade following removal of various fixtures and fittings.
Basement To First Floor 58 - 60 Portland Street Manchester M1 4QT
Ref. No: 142537/FO/2025 | Validated: Wed 26 Mar 2025 | Status: Decided
- Installation of 2 no. fascia signage, 2 no. projecting signs, ATM surround sign, together with various non illuminated information signs following removal of existing signage
Basement To First Floor 58 - 60 Portland Street Manchester M1 4QT
Ref. No: 131585/AO/2021 | Validated: Thu 25 Nov 2021 | Status: Application Approved
- Installation of 2 no. fascia signage, 2 no. projecting signs, ATM surround sign, together with various non illuminated information signs following removal of existing signage
Ref. No: 130661/AO/2021 | Status: Application Approved
- External alterations to make good facade following removal of various fixtures and fittings.
Ref. No: 142537/FO/2025 | Status: Application Approved
- Various signage to bank premises
58 and 60, Portland Street, City
Ref. No: 045340/AO/CITY2/94 | Validated: Tue 29 Mar 1994 | Status: Application Approved
- Elevational alterations to Portland Street and Nicholas Street and change of use of No 58 from B1 to A2 use
56,58 and 60, Portland Street, City
Ref. No: 045339/FO/CITY2/94 | Validated: Tue 29 Mar 1994 | Status: Application Approved

There are no features of historic or architectural interest related to the application site that are impacted by the proposed development.

Planning Policy and Assessment

Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted on 11 July 2012 and is the key document in the Manchester Local Plan. Also still relevant is the aged Manchester UDP. The 'Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document for Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan 2022 To 2039' was adopted on 21 March 2024. It replaces some sections of the adopted Core Strategy. The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (the UDP) was adopted by the Council on 21 July 1995. However, Manchester's Core Strategy is the key Development Plan Document in the Local Development Framework (LDF). It replaces significant elements of the UDP as the document that sets out the long-term strategic policies for Manchester's future development and forms the framework that planning applications will be assessed against. Having said this there are still some extant policies in the UDP.

The subject property is located in the City Centre but is outwith with the Primary Shopping Area. The site is also located in the George Street Conservation Area. Policy EN1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas) is a design policy. It advises that developer's will be expected to consider the City's heritage, including its listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and historic street pattern.

Policy EN3 (Heritage) advises that new developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment. It states –

Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre. New developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains.

Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

Policy EC3 is a core strategic policy, dealing with Manchester City Centre are as the Regional Centre. It is generally supportive and states (inter alia) –

Within the Regional Centre development for employment generating uses including

offices and other commercial development will be encouraged. Office developments will be appropriate providing that:

- **They are in locations which are well connected by sustainable transport to both the City Centre and residential areas, and**
- **The scale and type of office development does not undermine delivery of employment space within the City Centre.**

The Regional Centre is an appropriate location for large scale leisure uses, for which City Centre sites are unsuitable.

Policy CC1 advises that the city centre is the primary focus for economic development. Investment by national and international business is encouraged in the City Centre and is considered a 'suitable location for the consideration of high-density buildings and commercially led mixed use schemes. CC1 also states –

Provision of a range of economic development uses, such as retail, leisure, entertainment, cultural and tourism facilities will be encouraged in the City Centre, in line with Policy C1, to support the development of a vibrant employment location attractive to businesses, employees and visitors to the City Centre.

Policy CC4 deals with Tourism, Culture and Leisure. It states –

The City Centre will be the focus for culture and leisure in the City Region. Proposals to improve the appearance, use and accessibility of all cultural and visitor attractions and associated facilities will be supported. The improvement of facilities for business visitors will also be supported.

CC7 supports Mixed Use Development. It promotes mixed used development as a means of using land as efficiently as possible. It states that a range of uses should be considered for all sites. Active ground floor shop uses are appropriate in locations which have an established public function or as part of a development which will create such an environment.

Policy CC10, 'A Place for Everyone' states –

The City Centre will develop as a location which appeals to a wide range of residents and visitors.

Policy DM1 is a general Development Management policy. it states (inter alia)

All development should have regard to the following specific issues for which more detailed guidance may be given within a supplementary planning document:-

- **Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail.**
- **Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area.**
- **Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise.**
- **Accessibility: buildings and neighbourhoods fully accessible to disabled people, access to new development by sustainable transport modes.**
- **Community safety and crime prevention.**
- **Design for health.**
- **Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space.**
- **Refuse storage and collection.**

Saved Policy DC18.1 (Conservation Areas) of the UDP for the City of Manchester states that the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering issues including the effect of signs and advertisements.

The proposal is in accordance with Policies EN1, EN3, EC3, CC1, CC4, CC7, CC9, CC10. There are no physical alterations proposed in this application that constate development.

The NPPF advises local authorities to grant planning permission where proposals accord with a development plan or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date unless *there is a clear reason for refusing the development which is referenced in the NPPF or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole*. There are no specific policies in the NPPF which prohibit the proposed use. Indeed, the general direction of the NPPF is to support diversity and a range of uses. In relation to ensuring the vitality of town centres, competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer are preferred.

The government now favours a diversity of use in town centre locations with Class E permitted development rights allowing for use, or part use, for all or any of the following purposes—

1. a) *for the display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food, principally to visiting members of the public,*
2. b) *for the sale of food and drink principally to visiting members of the public where consumption of that food and drink is mostly undertaken on the premises,*
3. c) *for the provision of the following kinds of services principally to visiting members of the public—*
 - (i) *financial services,*
 - (ii) *professional services (other than health or medical services), or*
 - (iii) *any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality,*
4. d) *for indoor sport, recreation or fitness, not involving motorised vehicles or firearms, principally to visiting members of the public,*
5. e) *for the provision of medical or health services, principally to visiting members of the public, except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner,*
6. f) *for a creche, day nursery or day centre, not including a residential use, principally to visiting members of the public,*
7. g) *for—*
 - (i) *an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions,*
 - (ii) *the research and development of products or processes, or*
 - (iii) *any industrial process, being a use, which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.*

The impact of this change in legislation brought about by the long-term decline in traditional high street retailing, which was turbo charged by the Covid-19 pandemic is that it effectively negates town centre development plan policy on change of use and primary and secondary shopping frontages, with all manner of uses now being acceptable in a town centre location during the day and in the evening without restriction. High streets all over the UK are suffering and traditional retail use is in significant decline. The government now actively promotes an approach where *even* office uses are permitted development at ground floor retail sites and primary and secondary shopping frontages have little meaning in planning policy terms.

Portland Street is characterised as an area of mixed use with a range of late-night uses. Throughout the area. There are hotels, a casino, bars and restaurants and other uses which operate extended hours as would be expected in a world class sustainable cosmopolitan city centre location.

AGC's are established *bona fide* town centre uses which add to the diversity and choice of uses in town centre locations and which have no harmful impact on retailing activity. The

reuse of the property together with investment in the property at a time when town centres are in decline ought to be supported.

Internally, there will be no noisy amusement arcade equipment which attracts under 18's and has an impact on amenity. Unlike an 'amusement arcade' which is noisy to attract passing custom of all ages, there is a statutory obligation to exclude under 18's from AGC's. Such AGC establishments are commonly found at the heart of hundreds of shopping centres throughout the UK and are not uncommon even in previously defined primary shopping frontages. Indeed, many shopping centres have more than one AGC in the town centre. There is no evidence that AGC uses have harmed any interest of acknowledged importance. Such uses rely on pedestrian flows and trade successfully in busy town centres and contribute as a complementary use to the overall attraction of town centres to the shopping public. As an acceptable town centre use, AGC's are found in busy locations where there is *even* residential use above or in adjoining properties. The proposed use itself is not an inherently noisy activity nor in relation to the comings and goings of customers. There are no adverse impacts and there is no evidence of any anti-social behaviour being exacerbated by such uses. There is no audible trading noise break-out through the premises shopfront even excluding the masking effects of levels of existing ambient noise in the area. The proposed 24-hour use will ensure footfall to the town centre. In supporting evidence, we enclose a noise impact assessment (Appendix 1) which concludes that there is no loss to amenity even with 24hr use,

We should also add that the proposed use is strictly governed and regulated under the council's licensing regime where the local authority separately as Licensing Authority is legally obliged to take into consideration issues of the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance which includes amenity concerns such as noise, threats to community safety, litter, odour, smoke, and light; and the protection of children from harm. The principle of the proposed AGC use is therefore acceptable. At Appendix 2 we supply a Crime Impact Assessment produced by Greater Manchester Police who welcome the re-use of this vacant property. Greater Manchester Police support the application and have recommended the following –

- consider replacing the shop entrance door and means of escape doors with security-rated doors
- consider the installation of access controls (for night-time use) at the shop entrance door to allow staff to vet customers prior to releasing the door and allowing *bona fide* entry
- access controls should be employed to prevent entry to the staff area
- appropriate CCTV and alarm systems should be installed
- an operating policy should be developed

As such please note the following -

- Existing glazed entrance doors to be replaced with NEOS protect Secure by Design Model 3 doors. The doors will be locked shut at 2200 hours with two IGEM 5000 mag locks to achieve LPS1175 SR2 to control access. Individual customer access is provided following CCTV review by staff.
- CCTV Policy document supplied at Appendix 3
- Fire Safety Policy supplied at Appendix 4
- Security and Social Responsibility Policy supplied at Appendix 5
- Separately we are able to supply the cash handling policy, but this is not to be published in the public domain to ensure staff safety is not compromised.

Luxury Leisure AGCs generally appeal to a wide demographic of customers, and this is something that is regularly recorded and monitored by the company. Recent surveys of Admiral customers [see Appendix 6] (10 AGCs in London and the South East) undertaken in April 2023, suggest that females make up a significant number of the customers with a 67%/32% male: female split (with the remaining percentage preferring not to disclose) and that many are also relatively mature, with circa two-thirds of customers over 36 years of age.

Based on anecdotal evidence and experience, many visitors over night-time hours are those working shifts or anti-social hours and those working within the hospitality industry. These often include chefs, waiters, bar workers, taxi and delivery drivers. The majority of these customers arrive alone and are not part of larger groups.

Luxury Leisure have also undertaken surveys of visitor numbers across a range of their AGCs which operate 24 hours a day. This data was collected from 67 AGCs from the North- West, Midlands, London and the South-East and the East of England over a two-week period in January 2022. These are included at Appendix 7. Generally, this demonstrates that, on average, there are less than 4 visitors per hour during the period between 2am and 9am. This supports Luxury Leisure's assertion that their 24-hour operation is quiet and low-key, but also represents an important element of their service, which focusses around providing a service/leisure facility for those working anti-social hours.

Due to the lower numbers during these periods, Luxury Leisure can offer a more personalised experience for these visitors, which accords with their general ethos relating to customer service, whereby staff do not sit behind counters or screens and instead mingle and interact with the customers.

Furthermore, the company's security and social responsibility policy from the group Head of Risk and Compliance identifies the measures put in place to ensure security and social responsibility at all stores. This includes the following –

- Security and compliance is taken very seriously at Luxury Leisure and there is a 21 strong team that looks after this with at least 3 members being ex Met Police and Military Police.
- As part of the licensing application a comprehensive local risk assessment is undertaken to establish any local risks.
- A strict Think 25 policy is operated at all Luxury Leisure sites. This is regularly independently tested.
- The company invests heavily in staff training and all staff complete conflict management training.
- The company participates in nationwide self-exclusion schemes.
- A minimum of 2 members of staff are always on duty.
- Alcohol is not served or consumed on any of our premises.
- Those under the influence of alcohol cannot enter our premises. These procedures form part of the Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice.
- stringent policies to refuse and remove those who appear intoxicated through either alcohol or drugs or appear vulnerable in other ways, such as homelessness. We are registered with the Streetlink network so that our staff can report instances of homelessness.
- Luxury Leisure was the first UK operator to achieve the global **G4 accreditation** for social responsibility and compliance with Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice
- All stores are fitted with extensive CCTV coverage and are equipped with the latest HD cameras and digital recording equipment with a minimum of 30 days' footage retention to standard BS 62676.
- The CCTV can be viewed and reviewed remotely by key managers and security staff and in the event of an alarm activation is monitored live at the alarm monitoring station.
- All venues are fitted with a monitored intruder alarm system.
- a 'live monitored' hold-up alarm system is installed at all venues with 2-way audio communication with staff
- staff are trained to 'Know your customer'. This approach has been adopted as a core tenet of our customer service provision ensuring that we operate in a way that is socially responsible by assisting our staff identify problem gambling and also minimising the risk of crimes such as theft, money laundering and fraud.
- Luxury Leisure subscribe to and are active members of local town centre 'Business Crime Reduction Partnerships'.
- Luxury Leisure are part of the 'Walksafe' safe space network, providing safe places for women and vulnerable people using the Walksafe app to seek refuge when in need.

Luxury Leisure has never had a licence reviewed or revoked and is a socially responsible national multiple operator with an excellent covenant.

The level of regulation and self-imposed security and social responsibility measures implemented at each site are evidence of a highly professional national multiple quality leisure use that is a feature of the UK High Street and a recognised brand name. The subject proposal fully complies with the NPPF and the adopted development plan. The predominant commercial function of the city centre is easily maintained.

For all the above reasons we commend this application for your approval.

Should you require any additional information, please contact these offices in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

HARIS KASUJI BA MA MRTPI