



Planning Potential were successful in winning an appeal for a new Metro Bank store in Leicester, overturning all three reasons for refusal.

Planning Potential were instructed to obtain planning permission for a new Metro Bank store in Leicester, the challenger bank's first in the East Midlands. Metro Bank hoped to create a contemporary double height glazed shopfront on the corner of a 1960s shopping centre, breathing new life into the prominent building and establishing the Company's distinct brand identity. The site is located in the heart of Leicester's bustling city centre, which is home to a mixture of retail and town centre uses, and is heritage sensitive given its proximity to the High Street Conservation Area and Grade II listed Clock Tower.

We adopted a coordinated approach, working closely with Metro Bank's property team to ensure careful management of the entire planning process, from pre-application discussions, all the way through to determination. Considerable pre-application engagement was also undertaken prior to the submission, which included meetings with councillors, planning officers, inward investment teams and the local Business Improvement District (BID) to introduce the Metro Bank concept and explain the key public benefits of the new store proposals.

Unfortunately, following lengthy negotiations, officers resolved to refuse the original shopfront application, as they felt the design would be out of keeping with the character of the host building and the surrounding streetscene. Officers also believed the proposals would be overly dominant on the setting of the nearby Grade II listed Clock Tower.

Planning Potential subsequently submitted an appeal to challenge the decision and requested that it be considered by way of a hearing, which allows for technical evidence to be orally presented to the inspector. To ensure a cohesive approach, Planning Potential crafted a comprehensive strategy, which included the instruction of legal counsel and the preparation of additional design and heritage justification. The hearing was ultimately successful and all three reasons for refusal were overturned. We were able to demonstrate to the inspector that, on balance, the modern double height shopfront was not inappropriate and would create an attractive and sustainable unit with a fully active frontage that complied with local policy objectives. The inspector also agreed that the significant social, economic and environmental public benefits associated with a new Metro Bank store would far outweigh the 'less than substantial' harm to the Grade II listed Clock Tower.

Summary of achievements

- Management of the pre-application advice process and promotion of the scheme to council officers and key local stakeholders
- Preparation of planning statements and compilation of the planning submission
- Close liaison with officers, including on site meetings, to proactively respond to issues as they arose
- Coordination and preparation of a comprehensive appeal submission, including instruction of key expertise and elevation to the 'hearing' Procedure
- Representation of the client at appeal hearing and successfully demonstrating the technical policy compliance of the design and significant linked public benefits associated with the Metro Bank store

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