

## When Lowry painted it this methodist chapel had people bustling to get in. Now it's a mosque

- **Mount Zion Chapel features in Lowry's A Street in Clitheroe**
- **Plans to convert disused building into mosque had sparked complaints**
- **Muslim leaders say conversion has won support of all sections of community**

By James Tozer

A former chapel featured in one of LS Lowry's renowned street scenes is to reopen as a mosque.

The plan to use the Mount Zion Methodist Church in Clitheroe, Lancashire, as a Muslim place of worship initially sparked fierce opposition.

The chapel can be seen in the 1954 painting A Street in Clitheroe, one of several paintings that Lowry, famous for his matchstick men, made of the town.



Conversion: The disused chapel in Clitheroe is being converted into the town's first mosque



Revered: The Mount Zion chapel in the Lancashire market town can be seen on the right in Lowry's painting A Street in Clitheroe

It had by then been closed for worship for 14 years, finding roles as a munitions store, metal box works and garment-making factory.

Now the local Muslim community is close to being able to worship in what will be the market town's first mosque.

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Plans lodged by Clitheroe's 300 Muslims in 2006 to convert it into a mosque sparked hundreds of objections, many of them branded racist, and the issue was picked up by the British National Party.

Seven years on, the first phase of conversion is complete, and the community is now trying to raise £250,000 to install heating and lighting, internal decoration, doors and windows.

Farouk Hussain, chairman of Medina Islamic Education Centre, said the work was now drawing support from all sides.

'It's been a long time coming, so there is a positive reaction from Muslims in the town,' he said.



'Wonderful': Muslim leaders in Clitheroe say that, despite initial opposition, the project has now received positive reactions from all sectors of the community

'However, the support from across the town is really wonderful. We've been getting positive reactions from interfaith groups and people of no religion too are getting behind the project.' He added that reopening the chapel to worshippers – albeit of a different religion – was in keeping with its significance to the town.

'We value the building and its history and it will remain the same as when Lowry painted it as part of his Clitheroe street scene.'

Clitheroe councillor Jim Shervey said: 'People of all faiths have the right to have somewhere to worship. There were some concerns a few years ago, but my understanding is they have all been dealt with. 'It's a good use of the building, and obviously it is better to be used for a purpose than left standing empty.'