

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 [Kerry Mcdermott](#)

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A chapel that features in one of revered artist Lowry's famous depictions of Northern England is to re-open as a mosque.

The disused Mount Zion Chapel - a methodist place of worship when it was committed to canvas by LS Lowry in his painting *A Street in Clitheroe* more than 50 years ago - will become the first mosque in the Lancashire market town.

When Ribble Valley Borough Council first gave planning permission for the building to be converted it was deluged with hundreds of complaint letters - some of which were deemed too racist to be included in public records.



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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

But seven years on Muslim leaders in Clitheroe say the first phase of the project is complete, and that it has met with positive reaction from all sectors of the community.

The re-purposed building, a disused former chapel, giving Muslims in Clitheroe the chance to worship in their home town.

Lowry included a crowd of people gathered outside the chapel in his painting of the area.

The building ceased to be used as a place of worship 40 years ago.

The Medina Islamic Education Centre has said it is now working on its final fundraising push in order to pay for heating, lighting, internal decoration and fittings, doors and windows.

Farouk Hussain, chairman of the centre, said: 'It is almost complete now, which is a major achievement after 40 years.

'The ground floor is now done and the car park is ready. It's been a long time coming, so there is a positive reaction from Muslims in the town,' Mr Hussain 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.

'The building itself is ready, and it has been restored to what it was originally - a place of worship.

'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.

'We have no intention to change it, but to keep the building, it's history and religious significance alive.'

Once open, the centre will provide vital services for Muslims in the area, as well as a hub for community events.

Clitheroe town councillor Jim Shervey said: 'People of all faiths have the right to have somewhere to worship.

'There were some worries and concerns a few years ago, but my understanding is they have all been dealt with and assuaged.

'It's a good use of the building, and obviously it is better to be used for a purpose than left standing empty,' Mr Shervey said.