

PROPOSED DORMER WORKS AT FLAT 14, BRAZIL HOUSE

46 SACKVILLE STREET, MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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FEBRUARY 2022

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GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

Garry Miller is a heritage consultant, architectural historian and published author who has spent more than 35 years studying and working with buildings of town and countryside, in particular those of North West England. His career as a consultant began in the mid-1980s with the Preston-based Nigel Morgan Historic Building Consultancy, of which he became a partner in 1992 upon its rebranding as Datestone. In 1997 he was commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West, a buildings preservation trust based at Barrowford, Lancashire, to produce an in-depth regional study of vernacular houses in southwest Lancashire: the result, *Historic Houses in Lancashire: The Douglas Valley, 1300-1770* was published in 2002. The book was described as ‘scholarship as its best’ by *Country Life* (June 2003), and ‘well analysed and presented’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol 48, 2004); and was widely cited in the 2006 *Buildings of England* volume on Liverpool and Southwest Lancashire. Extensive research on the houses of Georgian and Regency Liverpool has also been undertaken, with a view to future publication. Following the success of his Douglas Valley book, Garry Miller established his own consultancy, producing analytical and interpretive reports on historic buildings, in particular the heritage assessments required to support planning applications affecting the historic environment. His area of operation encompasses the North West, Midlands, North Wales and parts of Cumbria and North and West Yorkshire. Several local authorities have cited his assessments as examples of best practice, and reports on more than 150 buildings or sites are produced annually.

THIS REPORT

Date of issue: February 2022

Status: final version for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at Flat 14, Brazil House, Sackville Street, in Manchester City Centre. Brazil House is a substantial warehouse of the 1860s converted to apartments in the late 1990s. It is listed at Grade II and stands within the Princess Street/Whitworth Street Conservation Area.

Proposals have been submitted to Manchester City Council for alterations to the modern dormer windows at Flat 14. The principal heritage consideration arising from the proposal is its impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the listed building. A secondary issue is (in respect of external works only) its effect upon the significance of the conservation area. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and assess how it will be affected.

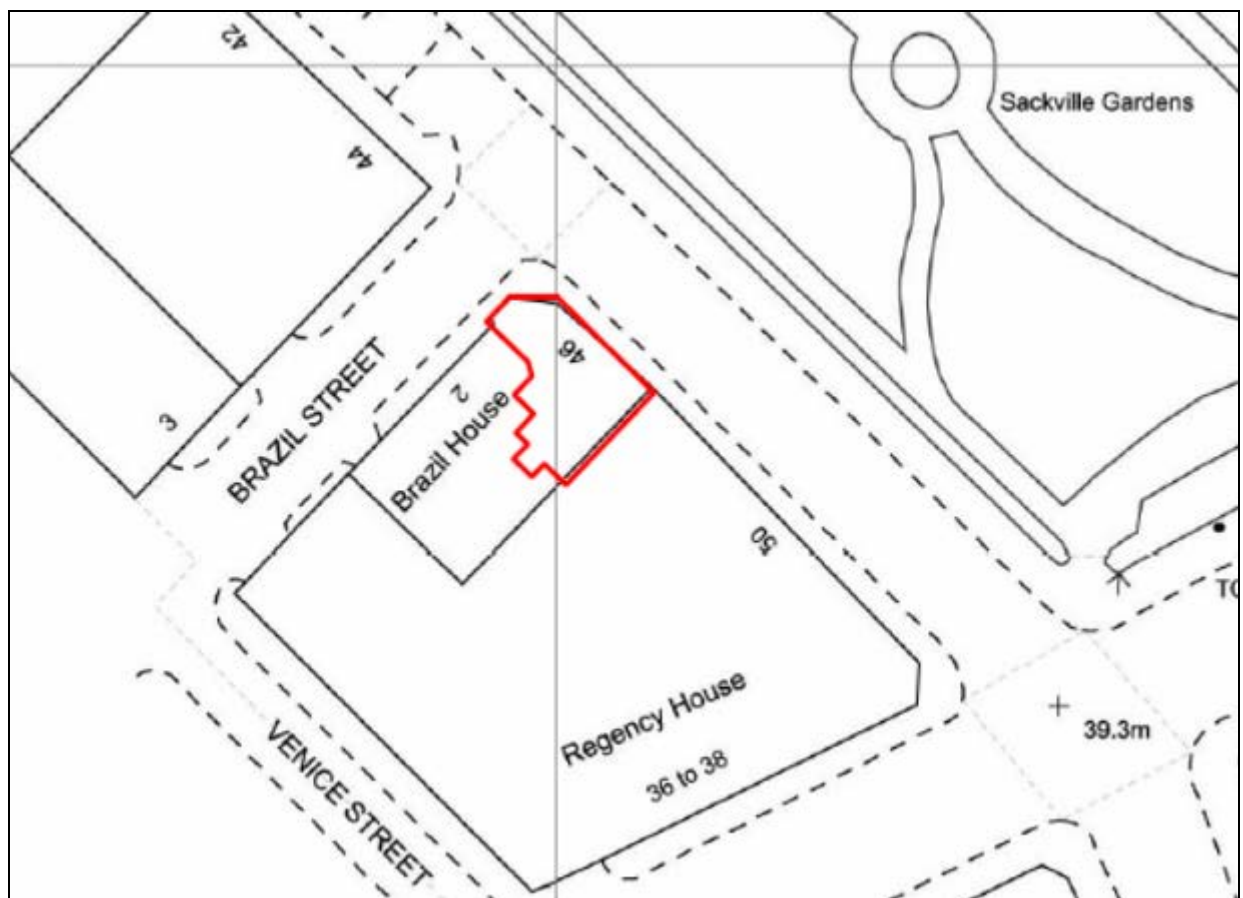
The Grade II designation of the listed building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this special interest, which is that of a substantial warehouse probably of the 1860s, part of a development by the Sackville Estate Company. The building therefore has architectural significance deriving from its form, appearance and streetscene presence along with historical significance for its connections with Manchester's supremacy in the global textile trade. This significance is embodied entirely in the original 1860s building, whose qualities (in respect of its external characteristics) are also the basis of the building's positive contribution to the conservation area. The works connected with the 1990s apartment conversion are of low significance as they are of modern date and of note only in how they represent the conversion of the building following the textile industry's collapse.

The significance of the conservation area that form its setting derives from its character and appearance as an area of substantial, fine warehouses built at the height of Manchester's textile prosperity. This significance therefore derives from its original buildings and their relationship to each other within the pattern of streets and spaces.

The overriding consideration is that significance of the listed building is embodied in the fabric envelope of the original structure, and not the works which belong to the 1990s apartment conversion. The proposed scheme affects the latter only. There will be no impact on any elements and features from which the significance of the listed building is derived: the works affect modern elements only, and will be seen in the public views which establish the significance of the listed building and conservation area as belonging to the modern elements. Perception of the building as a fine 19th century warehouse will remain completely unaltered. The proposed works therefore will have no adverse effect and will preserve the significance of the listed building and conservation area. They are thus in accordance with national guidance along with the relevant local development plan policies, and hence it is concluded that the application should be approved without delay.

2: THE SITE

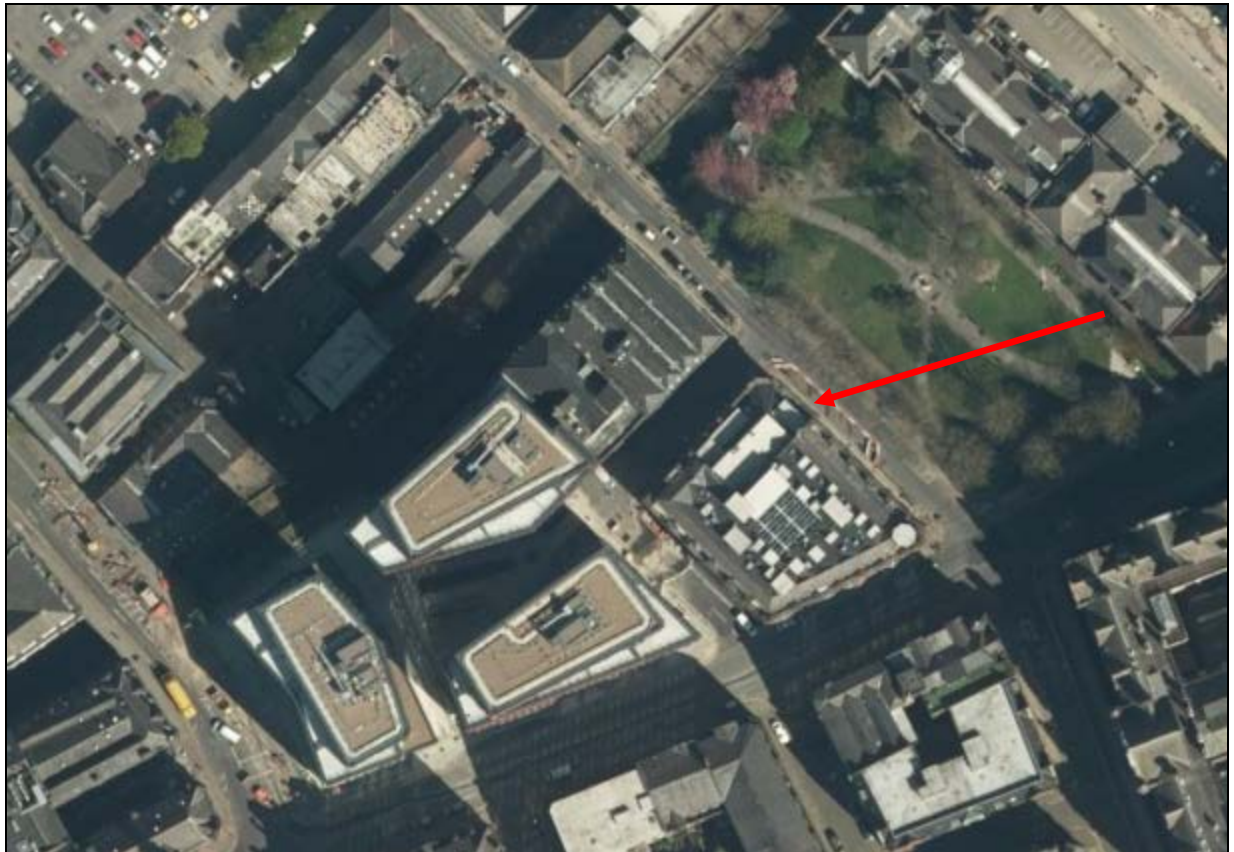
The application building stands in Manchester City Centre, where it is situated on the west side of Sackville Street at its junction with Brazil Street, opposite the open space of Sackville Park. Brazil House is a former warehouse, built at the height of Manchester's 19th century cotton trade, that was converted to apartments in the late 1990s. The application concerns Flat 14, one of a number of apartments created in its roofspace during the conversion.



Map 1. Location of the application property



1. Brazil House, where the application property is situated



2. Aerial view of the building, showing rooftop apartments

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Designation

Brazil House is listed at Grade II, having been first designated in 1994. It stands within Whitworth Street/Princess Street Conservation Area,

3.2 Proposed development

Proposals have been submitted to Manchester City Council for alterations to the modern dormer windows at Flat 14 Brazil House.

3.3 Heritage impact

The principal heritage consideration arising from the proposal is its impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the listed building. A secondary issue is (in respect of external works only) its effect upon the significance of the conservation area.

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 194 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) of the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised July 2021) states local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the listed building and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal. It is considered the level of detail presented is proportionate to its importance, in accordance with paragraph 194, and is no more than necessary to understand the impact of the proposal. This report is to be read in conjunction with other documentation submitted in support of the application.

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

1. A brief analysis of the listed building (Section 4) and of the conservation area (Section 5)
2. A summary of their heritage significance (Section 6)
3. A summary of the relevant planning policies against which the application will be assessed (Section 7)
4. An assessment within this context of the proposal's impact upon the significance of the listed building (Section 8)

4: THE LISTED BUILDING

4.1 Historical context

The property dates probably from the 1860s and was one of a number of warehouses built in the area for the Sackville Estate Company. The architects were W and G Higginbottom. While the initials D C over the entrance probably refer to its original owner, by 1909 the building was occupied by shipping merchants Ph. Zeigler and Co along with the Persian Gulf Trading Company. In the late 1990s the building was converted to apartments.

4.2 List description

The National Heritage List for England description, compiled at the time of designation in 1994, reads:

Shipping warehouse, now upholstery business. c.1860-70. Red brick in Flemish bond, with sandstone dressings, slate roof. Rectangular plan on corner site, at right-angles to street. Eclectic style with Romanesque features. Four storeys over basement, a 1:3:1-window facade plus chamfered corner to the right; with plinth, a Lombard frieze dividing the floors 2 and 2, brick pilasters to both levels, sill-bands to all floors, and wooden eaves cornice on moulded stone brackets. The corner has a segmental-headed doorway with stilted moulded surround and panelled divided doors, at 1st floor a stone canted oriel in Romanesque style, with a round-headed window which has pilaster jambs with carved caps, moulded head with keystone, Lombard frieze and steeply-pitched hipped slate roof, and at 2nd floor a pair of small round-headed windows. The main facade has segmental-headed windows to ground floor, round-headed to 1st floor, square-headed to 2nd floor and round-headed to 3rd floor, those in the centre bay mostly arcaded. Right-hand return has Lombard frieze and pilasters like those at front, 2 windows to each bay (all either round- or segmental-headed), and loading bay doorway to 5th bay. Left side and rear concealed. Included for group value.

The comment that the building has been included for group value implies that its special interest derives more from its collective role with other warehouses in the area, rather than its own intrinsic qualities. The adjoining Regency House (50 Sackville Street), a former warehouse probably of the 1880s, is also listed at II.

4.3 Flat 14

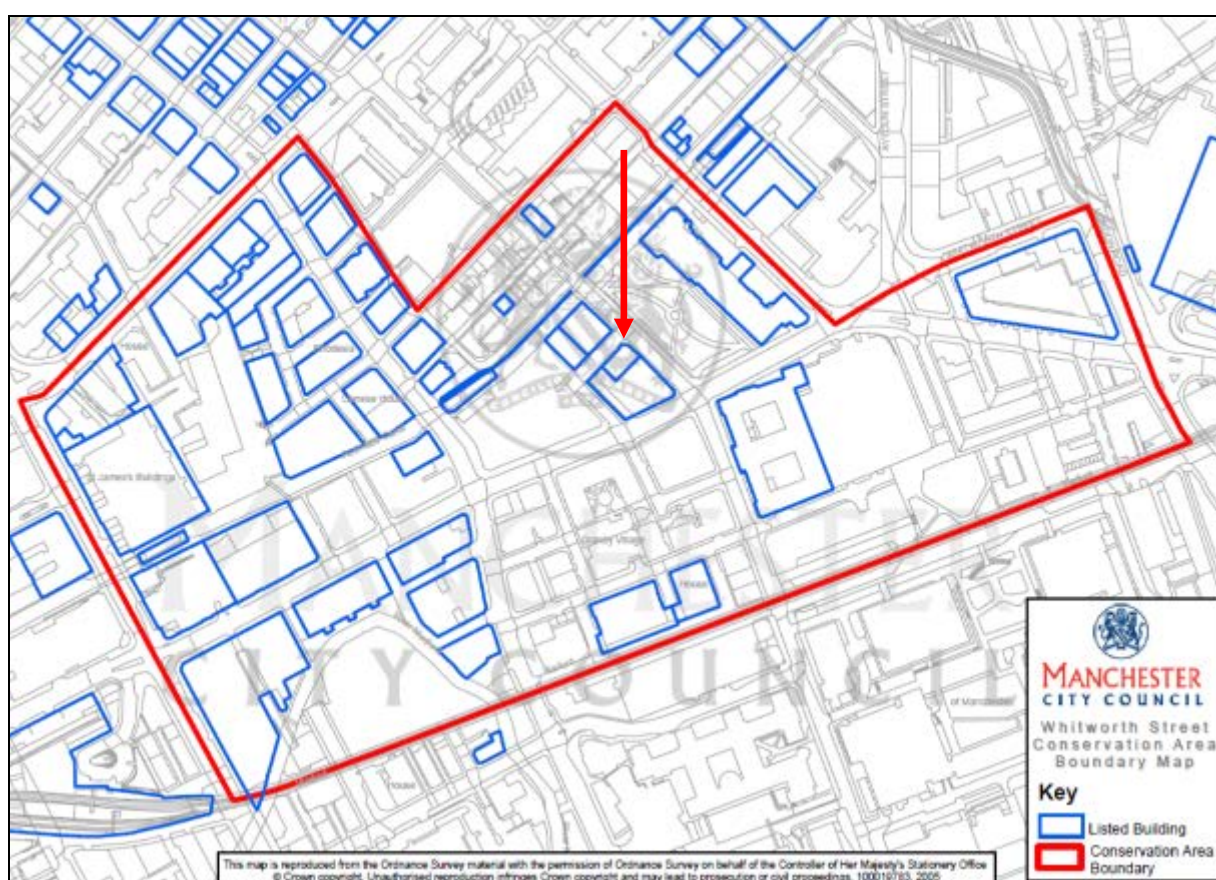
Flat 14 is situated on the fifth floor of the listed building and dates from its conversion to apartments around 1997. It was formed within the original roofspace, and incorporates some of the original roof structure, chimney and party wall. Externally the apartment manifests itself by a dormer containing sloping windows, which belongs to the 1997 conversion and is set back behind the original parapet. This has the effect of completely screening the apartment from street level, although glimpses can be obtained from near distance in Sackville Gardens.



3. The sloping windows of the dormer, set behind the original parapet

5: THE CONSERVATION AREA

Whitworth Street/Princess Street conservation area was first designated in 1974 and extended in 1985. Its special interest and character derives from being a planned district of fine Victorian and Edwardian warehouses erected during Manchester's 19th century zenith as world's principal textile centre. They date from between 1850 and the 1920s – after which trade began its long decline – and are the monumental legacy of the historical importance of the city's textile trade. A high percentage of buildings within the area are listed as being of national importance for their special architectural or historic interest. A character appraisal for the conservation area has however not been produced by Manchester City Council. The council describes its general policy as being to retain existing structures in the conservation area where feasible, and that new buildings and extensions to existing ones must achieve a high standard of design which relates to the architectural and urban design character.



Map 2. The conservation area, with the application building indicated

6: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Rationale

Paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework states local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, and take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal in order to avoid or minimize conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Significance is defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

6.2 The listed building

The Grade II designation of the listed building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this special interest, which is that of a substantial warehouse probably of the 1860s, part of a development by the Sackville Estate Company. The building therefore possesses architectural significance in its form, appearance and streetscene presence along with historical significance via its connections with Manchester's supremacy in the global textile trade. This significance is embodied entirely in the original 1860s building, whose qualities (in respect of its external characteristics) are also the basis of the building's positive contribution to the conservation area. The works connected with the 1990s apartment conversion are of low significance as they are of modern date and are of note only in how they represent the conversion of the listed building following the textile industry's collapse.

6.3 The conservation area

The significance of the conservation area derives from its character and appearance as an area of substantial, fine warehouses built at the height of Manchester's textile prosperity. This significance essentially derives from its original buildings and their relationship to each other within the pattern of streets and spaces.

7: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

7.1 Statutory duty

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to give special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

7.2 Relevant policies

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides the guidance on how the statutory duty is to be put into practice. Paragraph 197 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

Regarding designated heritage assets, paragraph 199 states that ‘great weight’ should be given to their conservation and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be; that significance can be lost through development within its setting.

This guidance is reflected by heritage policies of the local development plan. Relevant in this case are:

- Policy EN3 of the City Council’s Local Development Framework Core Strategy, adopted July 2012. This 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.

- Saved policy DC18 of the Unitary Development Plan (Conservation Areas), which states that the council will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas
- Saved Policy DC19 (Listed Buildings), which states:

In determining applications for listed building consent or planning applications for development involving or having an impact on buildings of Special Architectural or historic Interest, the Council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings and to protecting their general setting.

The policy states furthermore that the council will not permit any external or internal alteration or addition where there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character.

8: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

8.1 Summary of the scheme

The purpose of the works is to replace the two existing angled windows of the dormer with one new angled windows and a set of vertical bi-folding doors, along with formation of a small external terrace area as a result of the latter. This primary reason is to remedy rot and water ingress in the existing dormers, but the proposal also seeks to create a small area of rooftop[space for the owners. The proposal is a modified resubmission of an earlier scheme (127939/FO/2020 & 127940/LO/2020) which was refused in March 2021. It differs in respect that a proposed raised internal floor has been omitted, and that a metal (rather than glass) balcony guard rail is now proposed.

8.2 The previous application: council comments

The decision notice for the previous scheme, dated March 05, 2021, gives the following reason for refusal:

The proposed works are unacceptable as they would cause harm to the character and appearance of the listed building and views of the application site from within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area. The proposed replacement of a set of angled windows with a vertical set of bifolding doors would harmfully diminish the angled appearance of the elevation which is typical of runs of rooflights found historically on warehouses such as the application building and introduce an uncoordinated appearance on the Sackville Street elevation. This harm would be compounded by the fact that the proposal would be highly visible from both ground level and/or taller buildings surrounding the site in various directions. For these reasons, the proposal would be unacceptable and inconsistent with guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework and policies SP1, CC9, EN3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy and saved policies DC18.1 and DC19.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester.

Correspondence from the planning officer during the determination process included the following comments, which are understood to have been based upon a consultation response from the council's conservation officer:

This change would not only provide inconsistency between the two openings on the Sackville Street elevation but would be in complete contrast to the coordinated sense of design that continues onto the Brazil Street elevation. You have stated that you believe the works would not affect the appearance of the building, however we do not agree with this. The works as proposed are

unacceptable. You have also stated that the proposed works would not be visible from street level. This is not true as the existing extension is partly visible in oblique views along Sackville Street. The Sackville Street frontage of the extension in particular (both the upper and lower floor elements) is clearly visible from many vantage points within Sackville Gardens (especially when trees are not in leaf). The discord that the proposed works would create would be clearly visible and would be seen in conjunction with the existing upper floor of the extension and where the existing lower floor elevation provides it with a simply detailed and visually uniform base. The extension and roofscape of the building are also visible from various directions and from various buildings. This visibility is increasing with the tall buildings that have been built/are being built in the area in more recent times. It is also the case that with listed buildings, any lack of visibility of structure is not in itself an over-riding consideration.

The proposal also includes for an internal and external area of raised floorspace in the vicinity of the proposed bi-folding doors. Externally this would unacceptably conceal what is understood to be an existing external leadwork gutter/flat roofed area between the parapet and pitched roof structure. It would also exacerbate the inability of the existing parapet to provide a safe height of barrier according to modern-day standards and necessitate an addition to the existing parapet to meet current safety standards. A glazed balustrade would be affixed to the existing parapet fronting the new balcony space which would give rise to an inconsistent feature on the elevation and be visible in certain views and, in certain light, would be likely to appear more solid than expected. The proposed internal area of raised floor would further harm the internal spatial character and confuse the remaining legibility of the interior of the building. The impact of raising floors and the installation of a partial balustrade on the principal frontage are given no consideration in the submitted Heritage Statement.

8.3 Effect of the works

- a. **Overview.** Brazil House was listed on the grounds that it possessed special interest in the national context as a former warehouse probably of the 1860s. Designation occurred in 1994, some years before its conversion to apartments. The proposed conversion, including the rooftop dormers, was presumably consented at that time as it was considered not to adversely affect the special interest of the listed building and delivered the advantage of returning it to sustainable use and securing its future. These modern alterations however do not form part of the special interest and significance of the listed building as they have no relevance to the reasons for which it was listed. It is therefore considered that as the proposed changes affect modern features only, the effect was considerably overstated by the conservation officer in making their objection to the original application.
- b. **Proposed dormer alteration.** The refusal notice stated that the proposals would ‘diminish the angled appearance of the elevation which is typical of runs of rooflights found historically on warehouses such as the application building and introduce an uncoordinated appearance on the Sackville Street elevation.’

However, as was pointed out in submission documents for the original application, there are examples elsewhere in the conservation area of angled windows interspersed with vertical doors, such as 10 Canal Street, at the adjoining Regency House, and even the neighbouring flat at 12 Brazil House. A detailed description of the latter was provided in the heritage statement supporting the original application. All these proposals cannot have been considered harmful, otherwise consent would not have been granted. In this context, it is therefore unclear why the changes at Flat 14 – minor in the context of the listed building and conservation area as a whole – scheme were perceived to be detrimental.

- c. **Visibility.** The refusal notice states the perceived harm *‘would be compounded by the fact that the proposal would be highly visible from both ground level and/or taller buildings surrounding the site in various directions.’* The planning officer’s comments also focussed on this matter, stating *‘The extension and roofscape of the building are also visible from various directions and from various buildings. This visibility is increasing with the tall buildings that have been built/are being built in the area in more recent times.’* Again this is an over-statement. The rooftop apartments are not visible from the immediate street level. While they are seen from greater distance, such as Sackville Park, these are glimpses only. More importantly, any change would be seen in these views to belong to the modern rooftop addition to the listed building and not to the 19th century envelope in which its special interest and significance is contained. There would therefore be no perception of any detrimental change in the public views in which the character and special interest of both the listed building and conservation area is established. The council also comments that the changes would be visible from nearby tall buildings. However the views from these buildings are entirely private, available only to their occupants, and not the mainstream public views in which a listed building or conservation area is experienced or enjoyed. Little weight can therefore be given to this argument. The council officer also commented that *‘It is also the case that with listed buildings, any lack of visibility of structure is not in itself an over-riding consideration.’* However it is a fact that approvals for certain works on listed buildings are often granted where they are not publicly visible, especially where elements of low significance are involved.
- d. **Raised floorspace/balustrade.** The original scheme for an internal and external raised floorspace adjacent to the bi-folding doors was opposed by the council, the officer commenting that it would *‘further harm the internal spatial character and confuse the remaining legibility of the interior of the building.’* It is difficult to see how this conclusion is arrived at, given that we are dealing with an apartment area which is entirely modern, created within the roofspace of the original structure. It therefore does not follow that creating a new feature within a newly-created space would harm the legibility of the listed building, given that its special interest resides in its original 19th century structure. The internal element of the scheme has now been removed for the present submission. Also for this submission, the proposed balustrade has been changed from glass to metal, which is a traditional material more in keeping with the character of the listed building and would avoid the risk of appearing *‘in certain light ... more solid’*, which was the council’s original concern.

8.4 Summary and conclusion

The overriding consideration is that the significance of the listed building, and its role in the conservation area, derives from its character and intrinsic special interest as a 19th century warehouse. This significance is embodied in the fabric envelope of the original structure, and not the works which belong to the 1990s apartment conversion. The proposed scheme affects the latter only. There will be no impact on any elements and features from which the significance of the listed building is derived: the works affect modern elements only, and will be seen in the public views which establish the significance of the listed building and conservation area as belonging to the modern elements. Perception of the building as a fine 19th century warehouse will remain completely unaltered. The proposed works will therefore have no adverse effect and will preserve the significance of the listed building and conservation area. They are thus in accordance with national guidance established in paragraphs 197 and 199 of the NPPF, along with the relevant local development plan policies. Hence it is concluded that the application should be approved without delay.