

Application Number/s: 132289/FO/2021

Applicant: British Airways Pension Trustees

Agent: Euan Kellie Property Solutions

Location: St James Tower, 7 Charlotte Street, Manchester

Proposal: External Lighting Scheme

Ward: Deansgate

Description of Site and Surrounding Area

The application relates to St. James Tower, a 14-storey office building located within Manchester City Centre. The building was originally constructed in the 1960s, but has been renovated and modernised since, resulting in a much altered and more contemporary external appearance. The building is not within a Conservation Area. However, is in the setting of the George Street Conservation Area. In addition, the building is in the setting of listed buildings:

- Grade II listed Telephone Buildings
- Grade II listed 12 Charlotte Street, 17 George Street
- Grade II Austin House

Description of Proposal

The application seeks permission for an external lighting scheme, consisting of LED Neon strips on the building's façade and roof perimeter (LED Strips – Captain RGB at roof level and LED strip Aston 1615 RGB at lower level).

Publicity LBC

Site Notice/s Posted and Dates: Non required

Press Adverts Published and Dates: Non required

Neighbour Notification: Notified 08 December 2021

Representations Received: None

Consultations

Highway Services

Following the provision of further information, highways had no objection to the proposed lighting scheme.

Environmental Health

Following the provision of further information and details, environmental health had no objection to the proposed lighting scheme.

Save Unitary Development Plan Policies:

Conservation Areas (18)

DC18.1(e) states that development proposals adjacent to Conservation Areas will be granted only where it can be shown that they will not harm the appearance or character of the area. This will include the protection of views into and out of Conservation Areas.

Listed Buildings (19)

DC19.1(d) states that the LPA shall seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity.

Core Strategy Policies:

Spatial Principles (SP1)

Development in all parts of the city should create well designed places that enhance or create character, make a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents, consider the needs for all members of the community and protect and enhance the built and natural environment.

Design & Heritage (CC9)

Development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance any identified heritage assets, including listed buildings and conservation areas.

Heritage (EN3)

New development should be designed so as to support the LPA in their aim of enhancing the character of areas and setting of listed buildings.

Development Management (DM1)

This policy sets out a variety of considerations that the LPA should take into account when considering proposals, including related to design and appearance, amenity, highway safety impacts etc.

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF should be read as a whole and forms a material consideration to all planning decisions.

Principle of Development

The principle of external lighting schemes is well established within Manchester City Centre, with a number of buildings, including high rise buildings, having a variety of external lighting schemes which serve to increase individual building's character and the character of the city centre as a whole.

Design & Heritage

The proposed lighting will be applied to the perimeter of the roof of the building, as well as the perimeter of lower roofs at third floor level. The lighting would thus only cover small specific areas of the building's external façade and is appropriate in terms of its scale and appearance.

The proposed lighting would be readily visible from nearby listed buildings and from the George Street Conservation Area, to which the building is adjacent to. This will inevitably cause some impact to the setting of the listed buildings/Conservation Area. However, this impact would be negligible. As per paragraph 202 of the NPPF, where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset (or its setting), public benefits should be weighed against any harm. In this instance, given that the harm is so negligible, even the modest benefit to the appearance of the building and character of the city centre can be considered a benefit.

In summary, it is not considered that the less than substantial harm caused to the nearby heritage assets warrants refusal of the application on heritage grounds, with the proposal generally in accordance with saved UDP Policies DC18.1 and DC19.1 and Core Strategy policies CC9 and EN3. The proposal is also in accordance with policies SP1 and DM1 in terms of wider design and appearance considerations.

Amenity

The proposed lighting scheme was identified as having potential impacts on nearby buildings by way of light overspill etc. Upon consideration of this, the applicant and LPA discussed how this could be addressed to negate the need for further testing. The applicant was able to supply additional information, confirming the maximum brightness of the lighting, which can be controlled indefinitely through modifying the product to be used. In addition, upon consideration of the bright, city centre environment, small area of cover that the lighting would cover and the negligible additional light overspill, the proposal is acceptable and would not be expected to have undue impact in terms of amenity to nearby building users or occupiers. As such, the proposal accords with Core Strategy policies SP1, DM1.

Highway Safety

Upon first consultation with the LPA's Highway Services department, there was concern that not enough information was presented for the Highway Services team to make an informed decision as to potential impact to the safety of road users adjacent to the site. Upon receipt of further information and re-consultation with Highway Services, no objection was raised. It is therefore considered that the lighting scheme and the brightness (which is set out in documents provided) is acceptable and would not cause undue impacts to highway safety. As such, the proposal accords with Core Strategy policies SP1 and DM1.

Conclusion

The proposed lighting scheme/development is acceptable on balance, having less than substantial impact on nearby heritage assets and creating character within Manchester City Centre. The proposal would not lead to undue impact on amenity of nearby building users/occupiers nor highway safety. As such, the proposal represents sustainable development that accords with an up to date development plan and thus, as per Paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF, should be approved without delay.

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning permission be granted subject to the following planning conditions:

The applicant/agent and the local planning authority worked proactively to identify issues with the proposal and work towards solutions that allowed the development to be approved without the need for pre-commencement conditions.

1. The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

- Location Plan and Site Plan (Drawing 03_000 dated 24 September 2021)
- Existing Elevation – George Street (Drawing 11_000 dated 24 September 2021)
- Existing Elevation – Chain Street (Drawing 11_001 dated 24 September 2021)
- Existing Elevation – Charlotte Street (Drawing 11_002 dated 24 September 2021)
- Existing Elevation – Faulkner Street (Drawing 11_003 dated 24 September 2021)
- LED Neon Strip on Building Façade & Roof Perimeter – George Street (Drawing A3/070921-1 Revision C dated September 2021).
- LED Neon Strip on Building Façade & Roof Perimeter Faulkner Street (Drawing A3/070921-2 Revision C dated September 2021)
- LED Neon Strip on Building Façade & Roof Perimeter Chain Street (Drawing A3/070921-3 Revision C dated September 2021)
- LED Neon Strip on Building Façade & Roof Perimeter Charlotte Street (Drawing A3/070921-4 Revision C dated September 2021)

All received 19 November 2021.

- Luminance and Illuminance Compliance Report prepared by One Electrical (dated 25 March 2022) – Received 28 March 2022
- Information regarding External Decorative Lighting prepared by One Electrical (dated 26 January 2022) – Received 01 February 2022

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.