

PROPOSED WORKS AT 52 PRINCESS STREET

MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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Heritage Consultancy

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FEBRUARY 2022

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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 52 Princess Street in Manchester City Centre. Originally named Rhodesia House, it is a large late 19th century warehouse that was converted to offices in the 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 a refurbishment comprising internal and external alterations to the listed building. 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 around 1885, built for drysalers (textile dye merchants) J C Harter and one of a series of huge commercial structures that characterise the surrounding district. 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 building, with the various modern additions and alterations being of low significance as they do not possess special interest. Given the alteration of its interior, this significance is primarily contained within the building's external envelope, which is also the basis of its positive contribution to the surrounding conservation area. Internally, it is only the features which survive from the original building, principally the floor and roof structures, which possess significance. Its modern alterations are of note only in how they document the conversion of the listed building following the textile industry's collapse.

The significance of the conservation area that forms 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 purpose of the works is to sustain the building's role and viability as commercial offices by attracting and retaining new tenants. The proposals respect the balance in which the significance of the listed building, and its role in the conservation area, is embodied primarily in its external qualities rather than the interior, which is characterised by its 1990s office conversion. As will be examined in this report, the impact on historic fabric will be minimal: the works will enhance its external appearance, and contribution to the conservation area, and sustain the significance of its interior elements. Perception of the building as a fine 19th century warehouse will remain completely unaltered. The proposal is therefore 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 Princess Street, occupying an entire block between Waterloo Street to the north, Bloom Street to the south and Harter Street to the west. Number 52 is a large five-storey late 19th century warehouse, originally named Rhodesia House, now converted to office use. It belongs to a streetscene characterised by similar huge and impressive buildings that formed a densely-built commercial district developed in the 19th century heyday of Manchester's textile trade prosperity.



Map 1. Location of the application property



1. *The application property is a substantial warehouse of around 1885*

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Designation

The application property 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 a refurbishment comprising internal and external alterations to the listed building.

3.3 Heritage impact

The principal heritage consideration arising is the impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the listed building. A secondary issue is (in respect of the 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 from around 1885 and was built for J C Harter and Company, drysalters (i.e. merchants in dyes etc for the textile industry). The architects were Clegg and Knowles, the city's leading warehouse designers from the 1860s to the 1880s, who were responsible for many of the huge commercial structures which define the surrounding streetscene. The property originally comprised two separate premises, the second with entry from Bloom Street. An attic floor was inserted in 1910 by Brameld and Smith architects. Its original use having ceased, the building was first converted to offices in 1994, with further internal works in 2007 and external repairs and redecoration around 2019.

4.2 List description

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

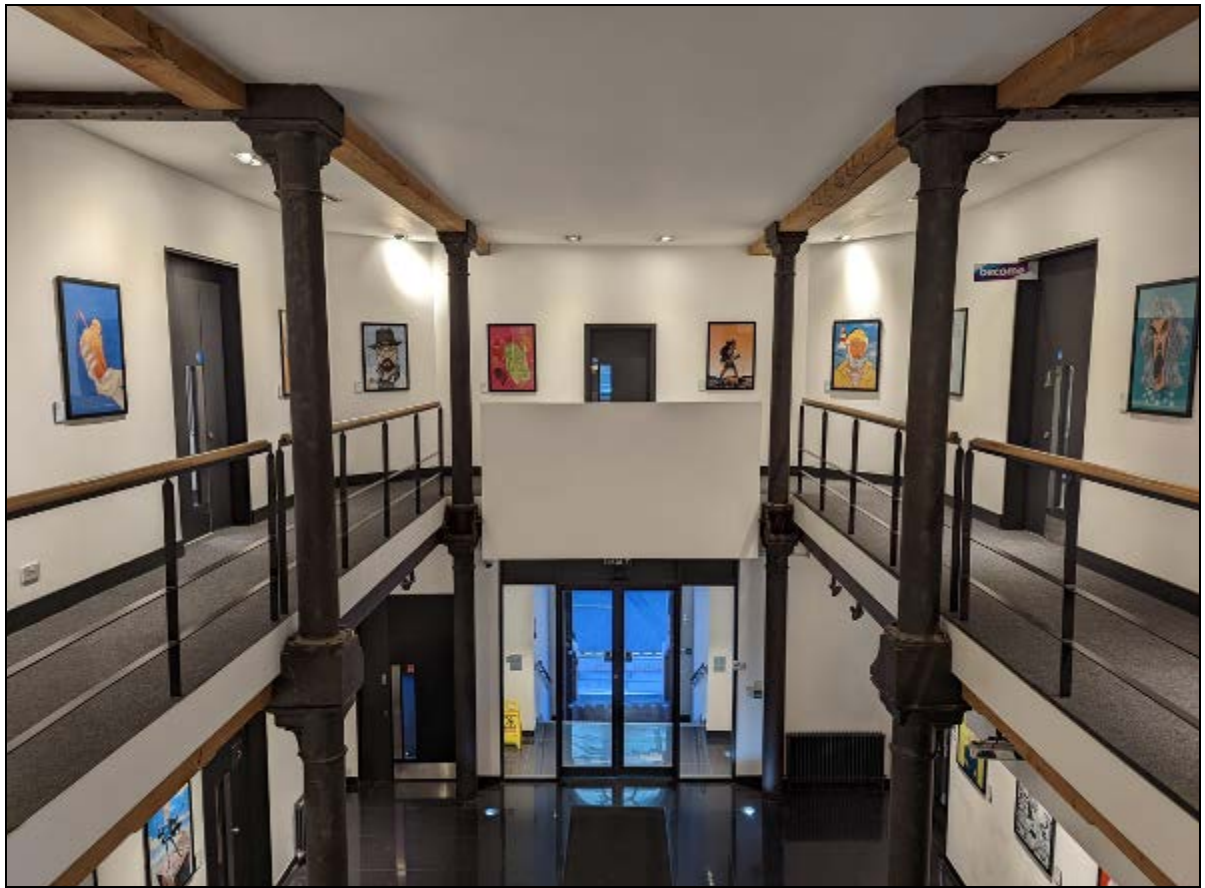
Includes: No.102 Rhodesia House BLOOM STREET. Various packing warehouses. c.1880-90. Red brick with sandstone dressings, slate roof. Trapeziform plan on island site. Eclectic style. Four storeys with basements and attics, 3 bays plus chamfered corners, symmetrical; punch-dressed stone plinth, string-course and cornice over ground floor, pairs of string-courses between floors, moulded main cornice with brick parapet, attic above this with 2 large pedimented gables, steeply-pitched hipped roof with corner finials. The ground floor has a round-headed doorway with brick pilasters, carved capitals, moulded stone head with carved enrichments including keystone and swags and flanked by pairs of moulded brackets to the cornice above; coupled round-headed windows each side, with hoodmoulds and keystones (boarded at time of survey); upper floors have coupled sashed windows to the centre and tiered segmental bay windows of stone in the outer bays, with curved 3-light sashes and panels between floors decorated with swags. The attic dormers have pilasters, 3-light windows, and triangular pediments with stone surrounds flanked by short square chimneys. The corners have round-headed windows at ground floor, square-headed above. Nine-bay return wall, in similar style, including one bay with segmental bay windows and pedimented gable, and coupled loading bay doorways. Interior not inspected. Forms part of uninterrupted linear group of similar buildings on this side of Princess Street.

4.3 Further analysis

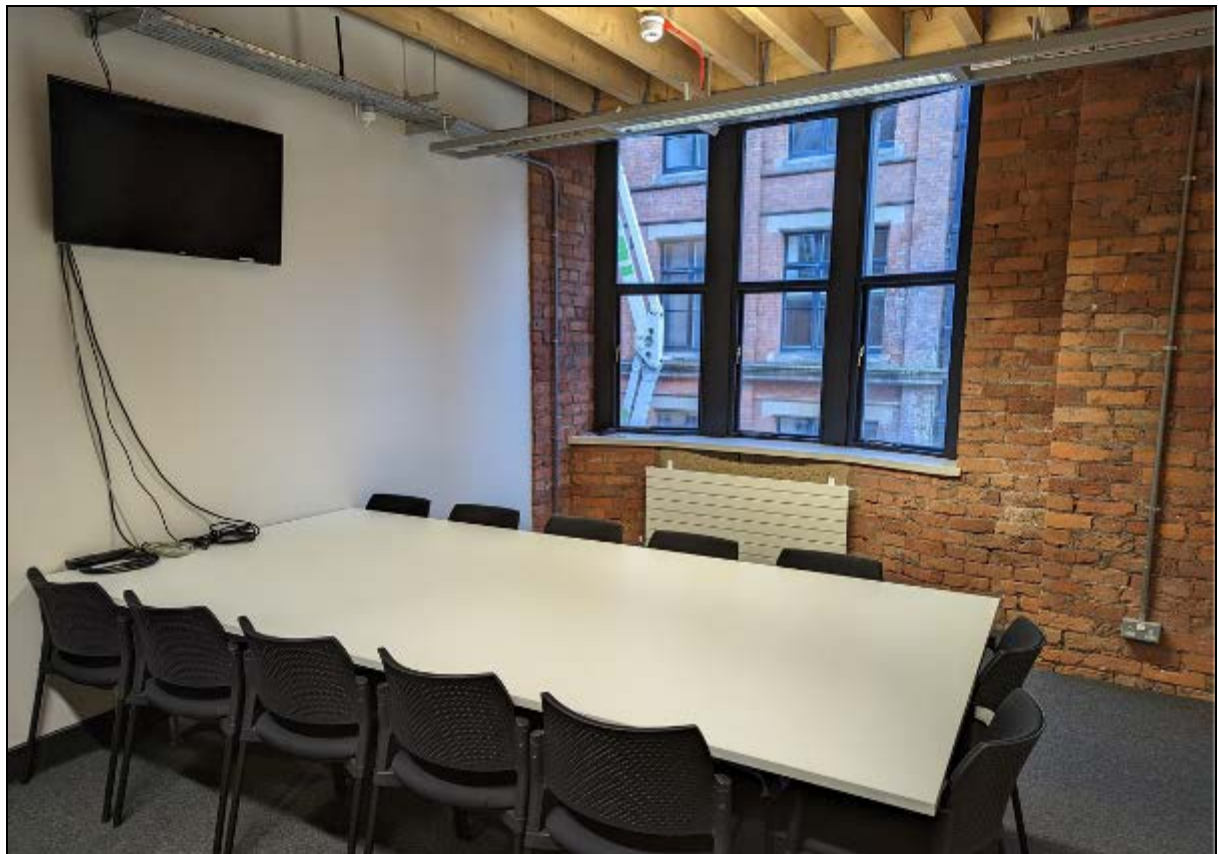
- a. Exterior.** The interest of the building is primarily contained in its external envelope, which with its size, massing and strong vertical and horizontal emphasis displays the defining characteristics of the warehouse district centred on Princess Street. The building largely retains its original appearance, although some details have been altered to facilitate its change of use: all windows are now modern casements, and ventilation grilles have replaced the windows in the basement.
- b. Interior.** The building was constructed in the traditional warehouse manner, with a grid of cast iron columns supporting heavy timber beams and a roof structure of timber trusses. While these features remain, there has been an extensive degree of alteration within, involving subdivision to form offices, creation of a two-storey atrium to the ground floor reception area, lobby and circulation areas and installation of passenger lifts and toilets. The appearance of these areas is that of a modern industrial aesthetic. The basement has meanwhile been converted for car parking, with an access ramp from the original loading bay on Waterloo Street.



2. Ground floor entrance/reception area as it now appears



3. First floor showing atrium



4. First floor meeting room; appearance typical of the converted office space



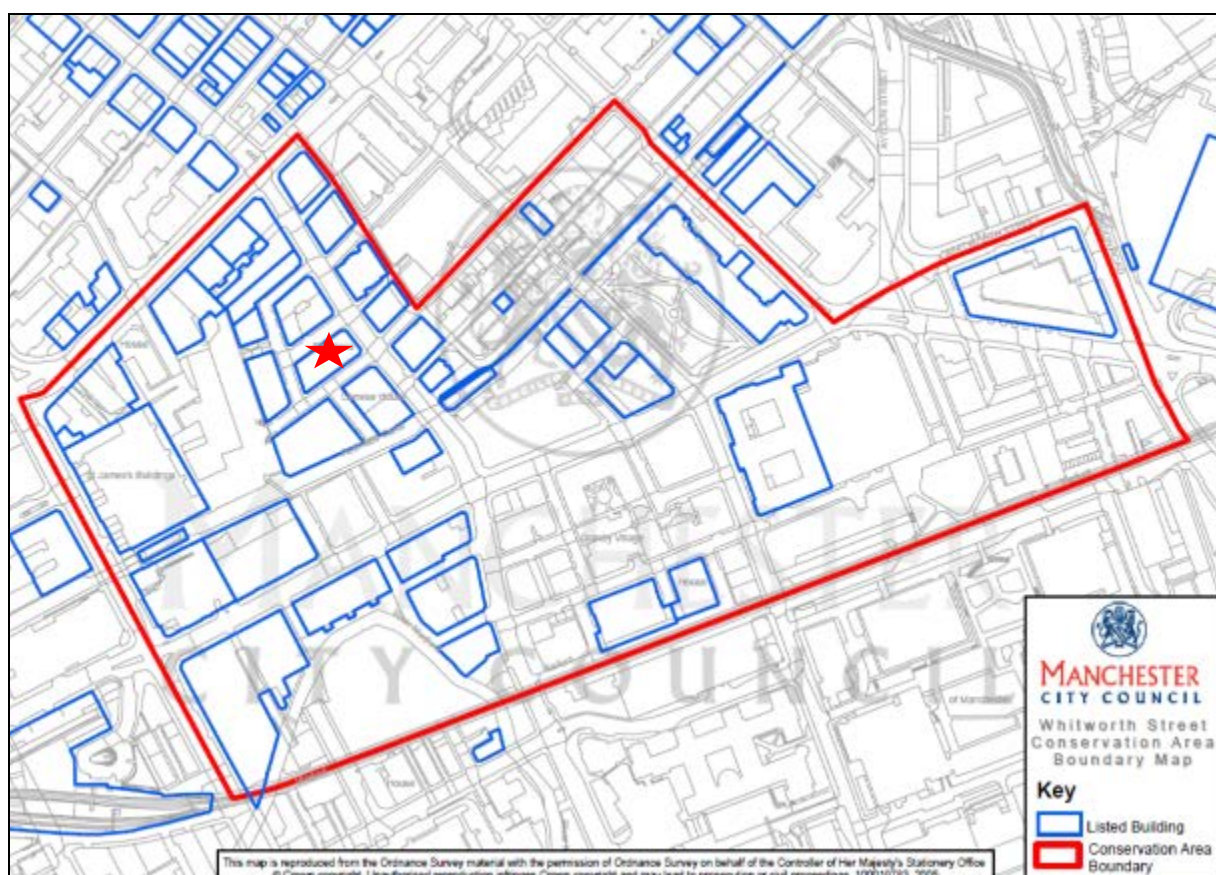
5. Third floor office space, showing original posts and beams



6. Basement is now used for car parking

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 around 1885, built for drysalers J C Harter and one of a series of huge commercial structures that characterise the surrounding district. 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 building, with the various modern additions and alterations being of low significance as they do not possess special interest. Given the alteration of the interior, this significance is primarily contained within the building's external envelope and this is also the basis of its positive contribution to the surrounding conservation area. Internally, it is the features which survive from the original building, i.e. the floor and roof structures, which possess significance. Its modern alterations are of note only in how they document 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 proposed works involve a mainly-internal refurbishment of the listed building in order to ensure its viability as office premises, by attracting and retaining tenants. The works broadly comprises:

- Minor external alterations including painting of window frames, metal railings, along with new lighting
- Internal refurbishment of the reception, common areas, part of the first, third and basement floors.

The proposals are fully details in a Schedule of Works that accompanies the submission and which should be read in conjunction with this Heritage Assessment.

8.2 Relevant planning history

A number of earlier consents have already been granted for refurbishment of the building:

- **Listed Building Consent for internal and external alteration associated with refurbishment of offices** (085215/LO/2007/C2) – approved January 28, 2008
- **External alterations associations with refurbishment of offices** (085212/FO/2007/C2) – approved January 28, 2008
- **Listed Building Consent for sub-division of existing open plan office, located at the rear second floor, into two separate offices for separate unrelated tenancies** (091329/LO/2009/C2) – approved November 16, 2009

8.3 External works

It has been demonstrated in this report that the significance of the listed building resides primarily in its exterior qualities. The works that are proposed will principally enhance its appearance and are as follows:

- **Painting of front entrance door:** this will enhance the appearance of the listed building
- **Painting of ground floor windows and basement grilles on front elevation:** this will also enhance the listed building's appearance

- **Upgrading of wall lighting of front elevation:** this will enhance the listed building's appearance and presence within the night-time streetscene

Visualisations showing the minimal effect of these changes are reproduced below.



7. *The front elevation as existing*



8. *Front elevation as proposed*

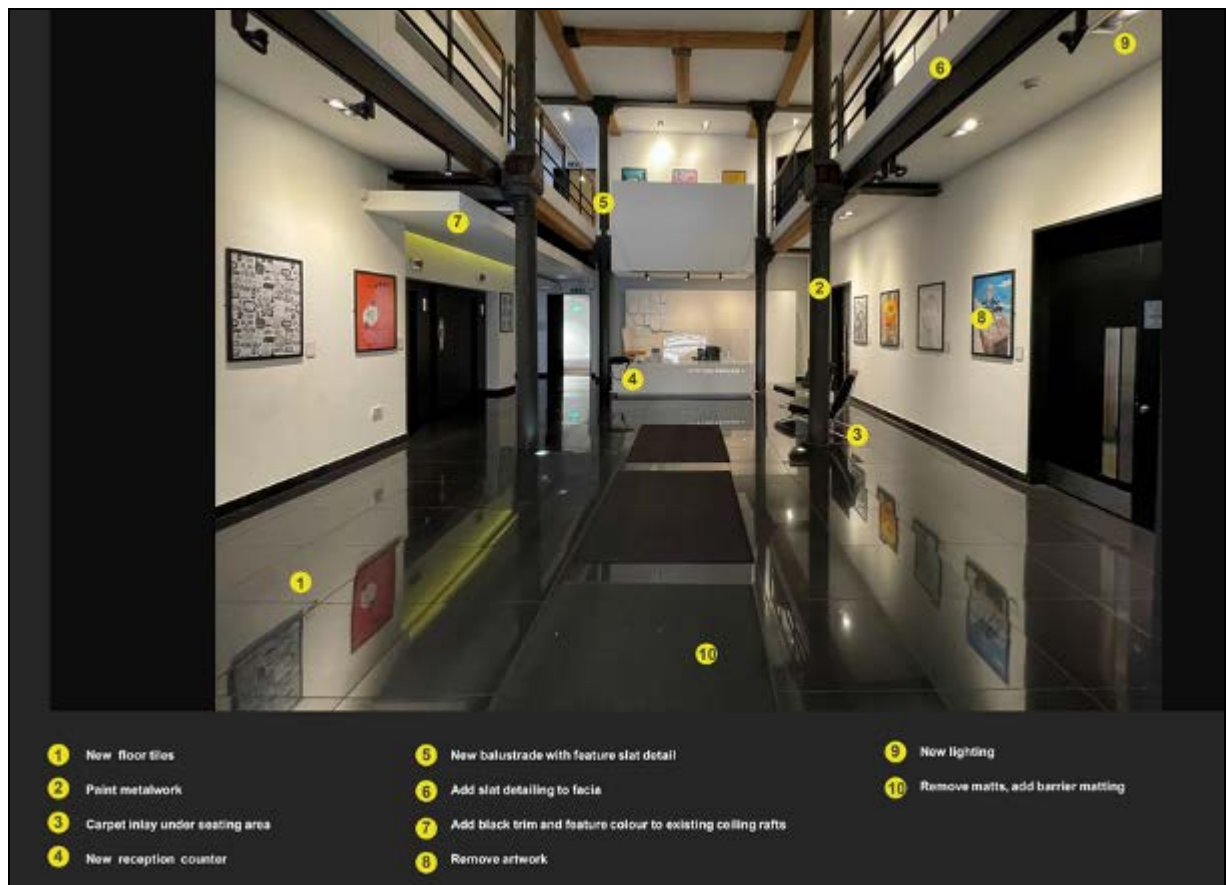
8.4 *Internal works*

These involve refurbishment and alteration of the existing interior, developing upon the industrial aesthetic which was adopted for the previous internal works, and with the overall aim of creating a boutique/industrial hotel look and feel. Essentially, it involves alterations to areas that have already been altered. The works take the form of upgrades to all communal areas and vacant office suites and provision of new facilities. The proposals are fully detailed in the accompanying schedule of works but in the main comprise:

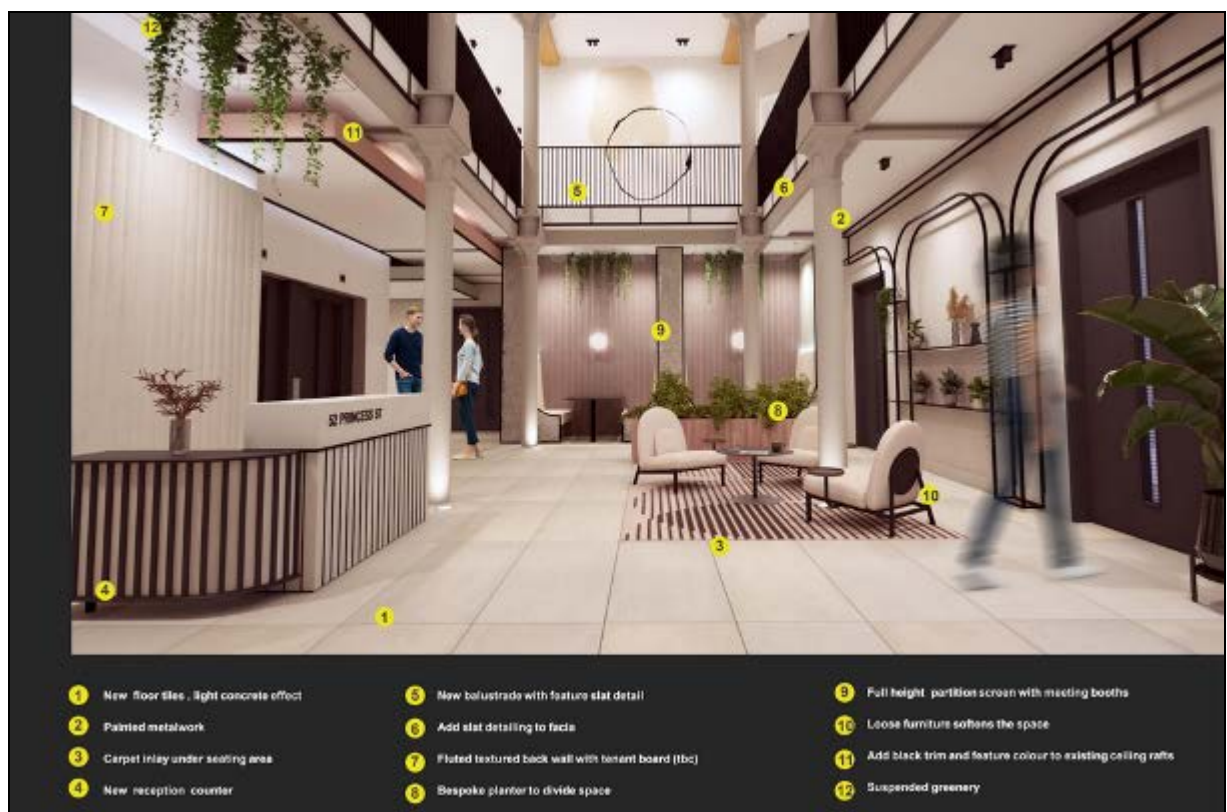
- Enhancements to entrance stairs, reception, stairwell, lift lobbies, WC's and vacant office suites, with new finishes, furniture and lighting as required
- Provision of new shower and changing facilities in the basement
- Provision of new secure bike store
- New/upgraded meeting rooms to vacant office suites

It has been established in this report that the significance of the interior is secondary owing to extensive alteration in the 1990s and thereafter. As the works are targeted at upgrading modern elements, the impact of the current proposal upon the historic fabric of the building will be negligible. The effect of the internal works will therefore be to sustain the significance of the listed building. As they are hidden from external public views, there will be no impact on the building's contribution to the conservation area.

Examples of visualisations showing the proposed effect are reproduced on the following page.



9. Comparison of existing and proposed views of reception area



8.5 Summary and conclusion

The significance of the listed building, and its role in the conservation area, derives from its character and intrinsic special interest as a large 19th century warehouse. This significance is embodied primarily in the external fabric envelope of the original structure, rather than the interior, which is now characterised by its 1990s office conversion. This proposed works respect this balance, and perception of the building as a fine 19th century warehouse will remain completely unaltered. For the reasons examined above, it is concluded that the works will enhance its external appearance, and contribution to the conservation area, and sustain the significance of its interior elements. The proposal is 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.