

121 Princess Street, Manchester, M1 7AG

**Heritage Statement for Minor Alterations to the
External Elevations**

Ref: C-0476



On behalf of

Centurion Investment (JSVII) Ltd

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement supports the Planning Application for minor modifications to the façade of 121 Princess St Manchester.
- 1.2 No 121 Princess St lies within the Whitworth Street/Princess Street Conservation Area which was designated by the City Council in September 1974.

The Conservation Area was bounded by Oxford Street, Portland Street, Abingdon Street, Bloom Street, Chorlton Street, Cobourg Street and the Piccadilly to Oxford Road railway viaduct. It was extended in June 1985 to include an area bounded by Whitworth Street, London Road and the above viaduct.

Whilst the building is not a designated heritage asset (nationally or locally) it is in its own right, a fine period building and the changes proposed will be seen in light of their impact/non-impact on the Conservation Area.

No 121 lies with Bombay St to the north, Princess St to the west and Granby Row to the south.

- 1.3 A plan of the Conservation Area is provided in Appendix 1.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Manchester City Council portal describes beautifully the nature of the Conservation Area and the growth of the area through the growth of the cotton industry:

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Manchester had become the largest textile centre in the world. As a result, the need for warehousing grew and it is these buildings, larger than before and built with considerable architectural characteristics that form the Whitworth Street/Princess Street conservation area.

The distinctive architecture which arose was both functional and expressive of the wealth of the owners. The front of the warehouses facing the main street was often used for offices whilst the rear of the building was used for storage space and for the inspection of the cotton goods in natural light. This led to six- or seven-storey buildings with opulent and deeply modelled front facades in brick and/or terracotta, whilst the rear was almost entirely glazed either in a vertical plane or a stepped configuration. The building style reached its zenith in the early years of the twentieth century, and culminated in the grand Edwardian commercial architecture of Whitworth Street.

The architecture of textile marketing remains largely intact in the area around Princess Street and Whitworth Street, though its association with the industry has decreased since the cotton slumps of the 1920s.

Townscape

The great height of the warehouses along Princess Street, and especially on Whitworth Street, give the area its most obvious physical character of a canyon-like atmosphere. The Princess Street warehouses are relatively early in date, and for the most part are relatively plain and simplified developments of the Italian palazzo style. By the time the Whitworth Street warehouses were built, the Edwardian penchant for decoration was at its height, and the technology for constructing buildings with a steel or reinforced concrete frame enabled them to be taller than before. These later buildings also tended to abandon the use of traditional brick as a wall material, and instead favoured the then fashionable faience or glazed terracotta, which lends itself to rich decoration.

Generally, slate is used to roof the buildings, though many are too high, or their roofs are too gently pitched, for this to be seen from ground level.

Windows, like those in most Manchester buildings of this period, are predominantly of the vertical sliding-sash type. They occur singly, but are more often seen in pairs, threes, or occasionally in groups of four.

Entrance doors are very frequently located on the corners of buildings, and this is often associated with the further emphasis of a corner by means of elaborate detail, or by means of an extended roofline embellished with a tower or cupola.

Property boundaries are marked by the building itself. One of the interesting characteristics of city centre construction of this period is that buildings covered the entire site, right up to the back of the pavement. Access for servicing and delivery vehicles was by means of a loading bay within the building itself on the ground floor. These often passed right through the building from one street to another. They were protected by large, decorative iron gates extending up to the top of the opening.

Although streets are arranged on a rectilinear grid, so that sites are more or less rectangular, no street runs straight for any great distance before changing direction. This creates subtle changes and interest, with views along a street being modified or foreshortened by the elevations of buildings on the outer side of a bend or curve. It also gives even greater emphasis to the corners of buildings.

The roads were originally paved with stone or timber setts. These have either been replaced by or covered with tarmacadam, but in some minor streets the setts are still exposed. Manchester was famed for the quality of its setts and the care with which they were laid. Most footpaths have been repaved in tarmacadam but some, notably on Princess Street, have been reinstated with new stone paving flags.

(Retrieved from: [Introduction | Whitworth Street Conservation Area | Manchester City Council](#))

3. No 121 PRINCESS ST

Comprises a seven-storey building with basement. The building is under different ownerships the upper 6 storeys comprise residential living accommodation (126 apartments) the ground floor and basement a night club. Main entrances lie on the corners of Princess St and Bombay St (historically the primary entrance) and Princess St and Granby Row. The residential accommodation is served by the north entrance, the nightclub the south.

There was historically a road running through the building connecting Granby Row and Bombay St for loading purposes. The former loading bay entrance on Granby Row is a retained loading bay area, however, that on Bombay St serves as an enclosed refuse area for the residential accommodation.

The building is constructed from an early reinforced concrete frame and brick/stone façade. The uppermost storey is formed with a mansard roof and dormers.

Externally the building is predominantly formed with coursed Accrington brickwork which is banded in its lowest levels to the first floor. There are a series of brickwork arches, below the string course at FFL.

Above this the windows form a regular pattern but diminish in size storey by storey.

There are Portland stone features across each elevation including stone cills, architraves and cornices. The fourth and fifth storeys are also graced with Ionic columns.

On the Princess St (west side) of the building are two impressive oriel bays formed with ashlar which run through four stories above which is an impressive colonnade of stone columns and two feature curved parapets.

Refer to existing drawings:

C-0476-09-Rev A - Existing Elevations A and B

C-0476-12-Rev A-Existing Elevation C

C-0476-13-Rev A-Existing Elevations D and E

Photos follow



View to main entrance



View to Bombay Street



View to nightclub entrance

4 THE NEED

The need for these proposals results from Manchester City Council, for the owner of the building to fulfil a Planning obligation, (relating to the sound proofing of a structure) following the remodelling of the building into residential accommodation. As described the ground and basement floors are currently a nightclub, the upper floors residential accommodation. Sound from the nightclub disturbs the residential accommodation, sound being transmitted via the structure – “structural borne sound”. A sound proofing solution is required to prevent sound travelling through the basement and ground floor to the upper levels. The current and inadequate acoustic provisions within the remodelled building have deemed it ‘unfit for purpose’.

5. SCOPE OF WORK AND PROPOSALS

Refer to proposed drawings:

C-0476-08-Rev A - Proposed Elevations A and B

C-0476-10-Rev A- Proposed Elevation C

C-0476-11-Rev A-Proposed Elevations D and E

The solution involves a structural intervention, whereby a sound proofing plane is introduced across the entire building at First Floor level, through all elements of structure internally and externally.

This statement deals solely with the façade and changes which potentially impact on the Conservation Area.

The Interventions

Externally 3 courses of brickwork will be removed (252mmm) above the string course to allow for the introduction of the sound bearings. The 252mm zone above the string course is the primary location but there are two variants.

1. At the north west corner the bearings will be introduced above the entrance arch and close to it.
2. The oriel bays on the west elevation. The bearings will be internal within the main wall.

The main bearings are set back 50mm from the façade which allows adequate space for the introduction of a facing string course. This will be formed with brick slips (fired to match the existing brickwork) adhered to circa 1200mm panels.

Introducing the string course will require the shortening of the windows in that vicinity. The intention will be to reuse stone features and cills immediately above the newly inserted string band.



An illustrative photo of a new string band formed with brick slips set against Portland stone.

A narrow vertical joint is to be made within the brickwork in the location of the party wall (with the adjacent property) and will include capable, mastic filler – colour to match the existing brickwork pointing.

6 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Assessment of Assets

- 6.1.1 A non-listed heritage asset but one which forms an important architectural and historical statement within the context of the Conservation Area.

6.2 Proposals and Justification for the Development

- 6.2.1 This section addresses the justification for the scope of the overall development using a recognized set of assessment criteria.

6.2.2 Proposals

The proposals allow for the removal of 3 courses of brickwork and the introduction of perimeter sound bearings faced with a brickwork string band above the existing Portland Stone String at FFL to the entire perimeter. The windows above will require adjusting in height accordingly thereby altering proportion of the windows at first floor level.

Fabric affected and significance – The main impact on the existing building is the introduction of the brick string course and shortening of the first floor windows.

Potential impact – These proposals have a minor negative impact on the Conservation Area, given the façade changes but which could not be deemed significant.

Mitigation – The proposals have been designed to ensure that the impact from street level is minimised. This has been ensured by

1. Using brickwork fired to match the existing
2. Dimensionally the brickwork will match the existing. Imperial 10"x3¼"
3. All existing stone cills/features will be reused
4. The brickwork panels will be pointed on site with a lime mortar to match
5. There will be a horizontal movement joint above the existing Portland stone string and indistinguishable from GL.
6. New windows will be formed in timber to match the existing profiles and painted to match.

6.2.3 Justification

1. What is the need for the development?

To discharge a Planning Condition, imposed by Manchester City Council.
Planning Ref: APP/B4215/W/19/3232722

2. Can the development needs be met in a different way?

This solution is within the scope of the owner's demise and is a proven method of reducing structure borne sound.

3. What are the benefits of the new work?

To bring into use a development of 126 residential apartments which currently lie empty.

4. Will the benefits outweigh any harm?

Absolutely. Bringing back into use 126 much needed residential accommodation.

4. Can you avoid (mitigate) any minor impacts on the heritage?

Mitigation has been discussed in Section 5.2.2

5. Is the scale, design, materials proposed for any new works appropriate?

It is considered that the proposed works have sufficient integrity to provide a technical and aesthetic solution without detracting from the beauty and character of the Conservation Area or conflicting visually or technically to the existing facade.

6. Is any new work in the least damaging place?

The proposals are in keeping with the existing brickwork and the location above the stone string course, in our view is aesthetically appropriate. The required improvements to this building will allow for the preservation of the original historic building and ensure its architectural distinctiveness within this unique location.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The issue of sound proofing this building to prevent the vertical transfer of structure borne sound is technically, structurally and aesthetically challenging, particularly given the building sits in an historic area of Manchester, the Whitworth St Conservation Area.

The technical solution involving the introduction of sound isolation bearings is a well-proven solution where structure borne sound is a problem. In this instance it requires those bearings to be situated above the existing stone string course at FFL.

The bearings are built into the wall and this solution presents a facing solution formed as a brick string course. But also requiring shortening of the windows immediately above by 252mm.

It is hoped that the proposal put forward is in keeping with the Conservation Area, and with appropriate detailing and aesthetics will be sympathetic.

It is believed this solution will allow the discharge of the relevant Planning Condition, will have little or no impact on the Conservation Area and bring back into use 126 residential apartments which currently lie empty.

We commend these proposals to you.

Appendix 1

