

2101/2/NM

17th December 2021

Former NatWest Bank, 437 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 4NW

DESIGN AND ACCESS/HERITAGE STATEMENT (Part V) TO ACCOMPANY PLANNING APPLICATION TO MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

This design, access and heritage statement has been prepared and is submitted in support of a previous granted application for Listed Building and full Planning Consent in relation to the building at 437 Wilmslow Road, Withington, M20 3NW ('The Site').
Previous application - REF 124396/LO/2019

The branch was formerly a NatWest Bank branch and the proposals seek to carry out internal/external modifications to include a new external, fully enclosed beer garden and the formation of a new external escape door along with a fully operational restaurant kitchen.

The property is Grade II Listed and lies within a designated Conservation Area - Withington Conservation Area.

THE SITE AND ITS HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Site is located on Wilmslow Road, circa 23m southeast of the junction with Swinbourne Grove. The property dates from the late 19th Century. The plan form of the building is largely rectangular with an irregular rear portion which is a later extension constructed in the 20th Century. Whilst the exterior remains much original character, the internal appearance of the building (save for the ornate ceiling area in the banking hall) has been extensively altered.

The application Site has been designated as a Grade II Listed Building by Historic England (Formerly English Heritage); additionally, the site lies within the boundary of the Withington Conservation Area.

Listing Details:

The national list, provides the following information for the application site:

List entry number:	1270512	Date first listed:	03-Oct-1974	UID:458611
Grid Reference:	SJ 84993 93136			

“Bank. Later C19. Sandstone ashlar. Rectangular single-storey 6-window banking hall in Jacobean style, symmetrical, with a moulded plinth, moulded sill-band, drip- band stepped over the windows, ball-flower and dart frieze, and pierced parapet with ornamented upstands and corbelled tourelles at the corners. The central entrance has a basket-arched doorway under an elaborate porch in the form of a corbelled-out shaped-gable canopy carried on 2 slender marble columns with foliated caps, enrichment to the gable including corner tourelles and an elaborate cartouche inscribed "Manchester and County Bank Ltd". Each side of the entrance are 3 large cross-windows with slender shafts, 2 large arched lights below the transom and 4 small arched lights above. Hipped roof with tall coupled cylindrical chimneys on the ridge. Interior not inspected.”

The Bank has a symmetrical decorative Jacobean style with 3 windows situated each side of a central basket-arched doorway under an elaborate porch. The interior retains some original features but has been subject to several alterations over the course of its history.

The building behind, previously used as offices, is a three storey Victorian red brick property with bay windows and a pitched porch, with a pitched gable on the right-hand side making an asymmetrical frontage. The double bay window and the dormer window both appear to be either original, or alterations that were made early in the building's history, with very little on the exterior changing since.

Mapping shows that the vacant site at the rear was empty in 1848, but the immediate context had been significantly developed by 1889, including the building of the Bank and associated building. This reflects the area's largely rural existence until the rapid

expansion associated with the Industrial Revolution, particularly focussed in Manchester.

The immediate surroundings to the building are principally Victorian in character, with retail use along Wilmslow Road, and residential use along Swinbourne Avenue. The scale of properties in the area varies between 1-4 stories, with Victorian town houses along the peripheral streets averaging 4 storeys.

CONSERVATION AREA

In addition to its statutory listed status, the site lies within the Withington Conservation Area.

Manchester City Council describes the Withington Conservation Area as follows:

The village centre of Withington is characterised by buildings with shops on the ground floor and one or two storeys of storage or offices above. Some are single storey, and the average height is around two or three storeys.

The Withington Ale House, on the corner of Wilmslow Road and Burton Road, is the most striking building, on account of its clock tower, and it thus forms a focus at the southern end of the village. It is a mixed Gothic-style building, built in 1881 of brick with stone dressings. The forecourt is separated from the highway by railings supported on stone piers. The original railings have been replaced by plain steel horizontal poles, but the piers remain.

The Church of St Paul stands back from Wilmslow Road and has a tall, square tower with large pinnacles forming small spires. It is built of red brick, in simplified Norman style, and dates from 1841.

Nearby is the Withington Forge, built of brick in 1881, a symmetrical building with a large central coach-and-horse entrance, and accommodation on either side. The floor above would have been the blacksmith's residence.

The earliest surviving building in the conservation area is the Red Lion Inn on Wilmslow Road, lying to the south of the junction with Palatine Road and on the corner of Marriott Street. It dates from the 17th century, but with many later additions, and of particular interest are the horizontal sliding-sash windows.

At the northern end of the village, the National Westminster Bank is a stone building with much decoration, including a finely carved frieze and balustrade parapet wall at roof level. It was originally built as the Manchester and County Bank Ltd in the 19th century, as inscribed in the stone carving over the entrance. Adjoining the bank is the Methodist Church, a stone building in Gothic style.

At the northern extremity of the conservation area is the Withington Public Library, opened in 1927 and admirably constructed of stone to suit its corner site.

St Cuthbert's Church on Palatine Road was built in 1881 of red brick and terra cotta, with much moulded decoration around the rose windows on the gables.

The Conservation area also includes residential property, such as the Victorian terrace on Tatton View, situated off Tatton Grove at the south end of the designated area. There are also some large Victorian houses on Parsonage Road and Palatine Road, some of which have been converted to offices.

THE SIGNIFICANCE

Mapping appears to suggest that the former NatWest bank was in consistent use as a Bank since its late 19th century construction. It does not appear to have any additional structures in its curtilage which may have been lost. There are also no archaeological reports existing for the area or its surrounding context. The adjoining Victorian House was used as an office supporting the bank for almost the entirety of its lifespan and is therefore unlikely to present any information beyond the development of the bank itself.

The potential for the buildings contained within the site to yield evidence about past human activity is neutral.

Historical Value

Derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative.

The principal historical values of the former NatWest Bank relates to the association with prominent local architects, Mills & Murgatroyd, and with the history and development of the Manchester and County Bank Ltd.

The historical value of the buildings contained within the site is medium.

Aesthetic Value

Derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

The aesthetic value of the former NatWest Bank lies in the contrast of the decorative Jacobean style of the Bank to other properties of a similar age in its context, and the high-quality Victorian design of the Offices at its rear.

The aesthetic value of the buildings contained within the site is medium.

Communal Value

Derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The former NatWest Bank appears to have had a single use for the entirety of its lifespan. Therefore, it has been in consistent use, within a local community, with a public use for over 150

years, until its recent closure. Due to its decorative style in contrast to more restrained buildings nearby, it is a visual focal point in the context of Withington.

THE PROPOSAL & JUSTIFICATION

The proposals are as minimal as possible and comprise of the following: -

- 1) The demolition work to the rear extension – (constructed later and has no architectural importance to the original bank, refer to photographs) – to form additional dining area.
- 2) New kitchen at ground floor with associated ventilation as required by catering offer.
- 3) Existing toilets within the basement to be increased in numbers to meet L.A requirements in terms of occupancy.
- 4) The internal decoration will be sympathetically refurbished with heritage colours akin to the original proposal. Existing architectural features original to the building to be retained (refer to proposed drawings and photographs) these include cornices, timber work/granite detailing and arch ways. All internal finishes will be made good to match the existing. Refer to submitted drawings for full details regarding the proposals.
- 5) Exterior re-decoration, at present the main fabric of the building is stone, heritage colours will be introduced to highlight the window frames to give some relief.
- 6) New signage will be the subject of a separate application.

Any elements made visible through this work will be appropriately made good, with input from the conservation officer, to ensure that the approach is best suited to the elements revealed.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The following section assesses the impact of the proposed development upon the building and wider conservation area, as well as a consideration of the visual impact, scale, design, materials and the associated possible harm and risk to the building.

The overall scale of the building will remain unchanged and there is no change to the existing floor space.

Impact on Heritage Significance - The proposed work at the former NatWest

Bank will have the minimal interaction with the historic fabric as possible.

Demolition

The demolition work within the former NatWest Bank includes the removal of modern partitions that distract from the overall space and stripping out of the harmful suspended ceiling. These works are considered to enhance the significance of the bank by making the space more legible and reinstating hidden historic features. The demolition of the internal walls to the existing vault area – (constructed later and has no architectural importance to the original bank, refer to photographs) – to form additional seating/dining area.

Repairs & Refurbishment

Wall finishes and features following the removal of the existing modern timber partitions. Restoration work & making good following the removal of the new but damaged suspended ceiling.

New Work

Doorway blocking between the existing banking hall and the existing office. Insertion of grills. Insertion of bar/food and beverage dispense counters, these are to be freestanding and not to be joined to the existing wall panelling.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the proposed change of use and alterations required to support that use will have a less than substantial harm on the significance of the heritage asset. Works proposed at this time are intended to and to restore lost historic features and improve the site by bringing it back in to use for the local community. The internal works will not have any impact on the Withington Conservation Area, or any designated or non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity.

The proposed alterations are small in scale and will have minimal impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area to which it is sited, or the listed host building. The proposals have responded to the need to preserve the character and setting of the building and the wider conservation area. The proposed development of the bar and restaurant would enhance the appearance of the surrounding conservation area and listed building. The alterations have aimed to be as minimal as possible, whilst not compromising the overall appreciation of the building and respecting its historic character.

The historic significance of the building and wider area was instrumental in designing the proposals and aiming to ensure that any exposed areas will be appropriately infilled with high quality material to positively enhance the building appearance and limit any 'harm' caused by the proposals.

The proposals would not materially alter the size and scale of the building and attempt to ensure it remains secure and presents a viable option for the restaurant/bar proposals. The proposals have aimed to respond positively to the need to preserve the character and setting of the building and the wider Conservation Area.

Where grilles are to be installed, their locations have been situated in areas where the authenticity of the historic fabric has been degraded through intervention, such as later window installations.

The proposed change of use and associated works will help to bring the former bank back into active and sustainable use, whilst also contributing to a regenerative effect on the local area, in conjunction with the new residential development at the rear of the site. The building is no longer fit for banking purposes, therefore change of use and proposed works are the most appropriate

way to retain this historic building, ensure its lasting sustainability, and for it to contribute to the existing and future streetscape.