

Planning and Regeneration
Manchester City Council
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 2LA

Our ref: 098-003
Via Planning Portal

Date: 21 October 2021

Dear Sir / Madam,

Xaverian College – Firwood Building

Listed Building Consent Application

We are pleased to enclose an application submitted on behalf of Xaverian College seeking Listed Building Consent for works at the Firwood Building, Xaverian College in Manchester.

This application seeks Listed Building Consent for:

The partial demolition of an internal wall through the removal of the upper portion and retention of the lower tiled section and fireplace, and in its place, the installation of a bar area to provide additional seating.

This letter accompanies the submission made to Manchester City Council via the Planning Portal ref. PP-10301257, and comprises the following documents:

- Application form
- This cover letter (including DAS)
- Site Location Plan (ref 5023-110-P01)
- Site Plan (ref 5023-1101-P01)
- Wall Details, including photographs (ref 5023-1600)

A planning fee is not required for this application as calculated on the Planning Portal.

Proposal

The applicant, Xaverian College, is a sixth form college offering education to students

aged 16 to 19. The Firwood Building is the college's original building and is Grade II Listed. It has housed the college since 1905. Over the years, the college campus has been expanded upon, resulting in a mix of original buildings and new facilities. Most recently, the school was granted planning and listed building consent for internal and external alterations to the Firwood Building, including the removal of a 1960s external staircase and the reconfiguration of the internal space.

This application proposal relates to Classroom 20, located on the 1st floor within the Firwood Building. It proposes the partial demolition of a first floor internal masonry wall, with the lower part of the wall, containing original green glazed Victorian tiles to be retained and repurposed to provide an additional raised seating area. The existing opening within the wall, will be widened to ensure that it is DDA compliant, which will result in the loss of a small number of tiles. However, the tile returns will be reinstated.

The majority of the original Victorian tiles located on the lower portion of the wall will be retained, with some needing to be removed to accommodate sufficient circulation space around the existing 'wall'. Any tiles removed because of the proposed work will be reinstated as an 'original' replacement elsewhere within the building, as required.

The partial removal of the wall will allow for a more flexible and usable space for the college, as well as providing a breakout area for students to work within. Whilst the wall is an original part of the Firwood Building, its partial demolition and the retention of the more historically significant Victorian tiles result in less than significant harm to the listed building and the proposal should therefore be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme. These include provide a flexible educational/break out space for the school, making better use of a currently under utilised area of the building and better revealing historically significant parts of the building, such as the tiles.

Relevant Planning Policy

Manchester's statutory development plan comprises the Manchester Local Plan (2012) and saved policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (1995).

Manchester City Council Core Strategy (2012)

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to the paid to the desirability of preserving features of special historic interest, in particular listed buildings.

Policy CC9 of the Local Plan refers to design and heritage. It states that '*development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments*'.

Policy EN3 of the Local Plan sets out that *'the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its district centres.'*

Extant Unitary Development Plan Policies (1995)

Additionally, the extant UDP goes on to highlight planning considerations for listed buildings. It states that planning permission will not be permitted for *'any external or internal alteration or addition to a Listed building where in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character.'*

In addition to this, plans should *'seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity, control over the use of adjacent land, and where appropriate, by the preservation of trees and landscape features'.*

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The revised NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF along with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) are material considerations of significant weight and relevant to the determination of this application. Other policies and supplementary planning documents (SPDs) which are relevant are also material considerations.

Paragraph 38 confirms that *'local planning authorities should approach decision making on proposed development in a positive and creative way', working proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.'*

Paragraph 95 highlights the importance of the provision of school places noting that:

It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive, and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a. *'give **great weight** to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*
- b. *work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted' (our emphasis)*

The scale of impact of proposed developments on heritage assets is considered in Paragraph 202: *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'*

Rationale

Planning and Listed Building Consent was secured on 3 February 2021 for the elevational alterations and internal reconfiguration relating to the demolition of the external staircase and internal alterations to the Firwood Building (ref. 129287/FO/2021 and 129288/FO/2021).

Since these permissions were granted, the school wish to make better use of the existing space within the Firwood Building. This includes the partial opening up of the wall between classrooms on the first floor. This will provide a more flexible education space for the school as well as a breakout area for student.

It is accepted that the wall forms part of the original fabric of the listed building, the most significant part of the wall (the tiles) will be retained in perpetuity and the lower part of the wall repurposed through the installation of a bar top, facilitating useful additional seating for the classroom.

When assessed against Paragraph 202 of the NPPF, the removal of the wall facilitates the repurposing of this space to provide modern, flexible teaching space. It ensure that the listed building continues to be used to its maximum potential, whilst retaining important features such as the tiles for the enjoyment of others. The works will result in less than significant harm to the listed building overall and as previously set out, should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Summary and Conclusion

As set out in the NPPF, the improvement of education space should be afforded great weight when determining planning applications. Paragraph 202 considers the impact of a proposal on the significance of a heritage asset and where it is less than significant harm it should be weighed against public benefits of the proposal. Applications like the one at question, wherein the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh any potential harm should be treated favourably.

For the reasons set out above, the proposed development is in accordance with national and local policy and accords with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and should therefore be permitted unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There are no such material considerations which

weigh against the proposal and, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF the application should therefore be approved without delay.

We trust that the above is sufficient to validate and consider the application, and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G Worden'.

Gillian Worden
Director

cc: Ivan Lewis, Xaverian College
Catherine Mulley, Pozzoni
Chris Seddon, Kilhey Consulting

enc: As above