



Ms Jennifer Atkinson
Manchester City Council
PO Box 532
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 2LA

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: P01430628

25 June 2021

Dear Ms Atkinson

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**LAND AT POLAND STREET MANCHESTER M4 6BR
Application No. 130627/FO/2021**

Thank you for your letter of 10 June 2021 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Summary

The application site is currently occupied by a visually uninteresting collection of modern industrial buildings, which do not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. We therefore have no objection to the proposed regeneration of the site.

Ancoats is a highly significant part of the evolution and story of Manchester, which flourished during the city's boom during the Industrial Revolution. The surviving buildings are not only visually and architecturally arresting, but also provide vital evidence of the technological, social and economic changes that fundamentally shaped Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The proposed new building would be visually distinct, and would not naturally tie into the form, design, pervading materials palette and street pattern of the Ancoats Conservation Area. These elements are significant in defining its character and appearance, and it is concluded that the proposed new building will cause harm to this heritage asset.

However, it is also noted that the proposals are identified by the applicant to have considerable public benefits, stemming from the ability they provide to coalesce a number of important functions on a single site. This in turn would have heritage benefits, if it is accepted that it would directly allow for the more sensitive



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redevelopment of the rest of the Poland Street area of the conservation area.

Historic England Advice

Significance

The site is located within Ancoats, an area of Manchester which was integral to the city's eighteenth and nineteenth century evolution. Ancoats' expansion owed much to Manchester's rapid rise in importance during the Industrial Revolution, and its surviving built form is a testament to the wealth, power and technological innovation that this movement brought about. The strong link between Ancoats and the Industrial Revolution is also of wider national importance, as the Industrial Revolution ultimately changed and shaped Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This change relates not only to its considerable physical impact, but also to the reforms that it brought about in social provision, sanitation and medication, and in social and political thinking.

The area was laid out in the later eighteenth century, and its historic grid-like pattern is still a defining feature of its character and appearance. This character is also defined by the quality, and varied scale, of the surviving historic buildings, which range from large mills to domestically scaled residential streets. Due to this architectural quality and its historic importance, Ancoats is designated as a conservation area.

There are a number of listed buildings located within the conservation area. However, as we would not identify that the proposals would impact on the significance of these, we have not considered them further as part of this response.

Impact

The site is currently occupied by a small industrial estate of mid-twentieth century construction. These buildings do not positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and we therefore have no objection to their demolition.

The proposed replacement building would be of considerably greater scale than those that it would replace. This is significant, because the character of the Ancoats Conservation Area is partly defined by the variation in the scale of the buildings, and we would express concerns if all new development was of a uniform and monolithic scale. However, in this instance, the prominent location of the site within the streetscape of Ancoats makes it an appropriate location for a larger, and more visually dominant, building.

The design of the building, which is proposed to be a 'mobility hub', is, however, in striking contrast to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is





partly the result of the proposed external materials and finishes, which are not drawn from the relatively narrow palette of materials which otherwise characterise much of the conservation area. It also does not follow the prevailing pattern of buildings being sited on the back of the pavement line. This is significant, as this reinforces the strong sense of enclosure, and emphasises the straight, grid-like nature of the street pattern. The building would therefore be a visually juxtaposing feature within the conservation area.

The applicant has identified that they believe that the scheme provides considerable public benefits. Many of these relate to the fact that the building would allow for the compact coalescing of a number of important infrastructure functions onto a single site. It is therefore argued that this would have a significant positive effect, as it would allow the rest of the surrounding area to be developed more sensitively. If this is the case, it is accepted that this would include heritage benefits, if it allowed the rest of Poland Street to be regenerated more sensitively, with fewer additional constraints.

It is also noted that the applicant specifically highlights that a number of the striking visual features, such as the external fins, are inherently linked to the functionality of the building, and therefore identified to be unavoidably necessary. We would, however, defer to the local planning authority to determine the exact weight they place on the public benefits the applicant puts forward, and whether the elements of concern are inherently required for the delivery of the public benefit identified.

Policy

National policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is articulated in section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework. These policies state that assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (para.184) and that when considering the impact of a proposed development, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (para.193). Paragraph 194 goes on to clarify that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

These national policies are supported in local planning policy. In this instance these are set out within the Manchester City Council Local Plan (adopted 2012), with Policies CC9, EN1 and EN3 being of particular relevance to the assessment of this application.

Position

Historic England has no objection to the proposed redevelopment of the site, which currently makes a limited, negative, contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. We also recognise the potential for new development to



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enhance this section of the conservation area, which currently has an ill-defined character, and would not raise concerns with the principal of this site accommodating a larger building.

However, we would note that in terms of its appearance, design, materiality and orientation to the street, the building will be a visually juxtaposing element, that does not follow the pervading characteristics that harmonise a large number of the buildings across the conservation area. It will therefore result in harm to its character and appearance.

However, we note that the applicant has stated that the building provides a number of strong public benefits, and that the incongruity referenced above is identified to be intrinsically linked to the ability to deliver these. We would defer to the decision maker to assess the weight to place on them. We would, however, accept that there would be heritage benefits if the proposals allowed for the less encumbered, and more sensitive, regeneration of the rest of Poland Street.

Recommendation

Historic England therefore has some concerns with the proposals but would also consider that the site has the potential to offer some heritage benefit. We would therefore conclude that the local planning authority should assess the application against the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 184, 193, 196 and 200.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

Richard Broadhead

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.



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The proposed replacement building would be of considerably greater scale than those that it would replace. This is significant, because the character of the Ancoats Conservation Area is partly defined by the variation in the scale of the buildings, and we would express concerns if all new development was of a uniform and monolithic scale. However, in this instance, the prominent location of the site within the streetscape of Ancoats makes it an appropriate location for a larger, and more visually dominant, building.

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