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Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report prepared by Planit-IE assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development with respect to Townscape and Visual Amenity. This chapter also describes the methods used to assess the effects; the baseline conditions currently existing at the site and surrounding area; the mitigation measures required to prevent, reduce or offset any significant negative effects; and the likely residual effects after these measures have been adopted.
- 1.2 This assessment is provided to support the planning application for the proposed development, and as such is a stand alone document. It is not intended to form part of an EIA assessment, and where reference is made to EIA guidance within the report, this is to fully explain the methodology used.
- 1.3 This report includes an assessment of significance within it, for information only. As a non EIA report, no assessment of significance is required. This purpose of this report is to allow for the identification of the magnitude and nature of potential effects resulting from the Proposed Development.
- 1.4 This Chapter is accompanied by five technical appendices; Townscape Baseline and Assessment table **Appendix 1**, Visual Baseline and Assessment table **Appendix 2**, Figures **Appendix 3**, Views and Photomontages **Appendix 4**, and AVR Methodology **Appendix 5**.
- 1.5 Planit-IE is a registered practice of the Landscape Institute with considerable experience in townscape and visual assessment.
- 1.6 The Proposed Development is for:

“Erection of a 17 storey building comprising office use (Use Class E(g)(ii)) and flexible ground floor commercial units (Use Classes E(a),(b),(c) and sui generis ‘drinking establishment’), new electricity sub-station, basement cycle parking and rooftop plant enclosure, together with access, servicing and associated works following demolition of the existing building”

LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

LEGISLATION

- 1.7 The European Landscape Convention (ELC, 2000) provides a foundation for closer co-operation on landscape issues across Europe and was ratified in the UK on the 21 November 2006, and became binding on 1 March 2007. The convention identifies the need to recognise landscape in law, to develop and promote landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the evolution and implementation of landscape policies. It also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies.
- 1.8 The ELC defines landscape as *‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’*. It recognises that landscape has important cultural, ecological, environmental and social dimensions and is a key element of achieving sustainable development. In this context the use of the word ‘landscape’ is more appropriately termed ‘townscape’ though the constituent factors remain consistent.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 1.9 The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in July 2021 and sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 1.10 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through three overarching objectives:
- An economic objective - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and

future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and,

- An environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

1.11 The environmental objective is of particular relevance to the purpose of townscape and visual impact assessment.

1.12 Section 12 of the NPPF deals with the requirements of good design. The overarching principle is set out in paragraph 124, which state, *“the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”*

1.13 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF sets out a number of principals of good design. In order to accord with these principles, it should be ensured that new developments:

- *“will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and,*

- *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”.*

1.14 Paragraph 134 sets out that “Significant weight should be given to:

- *development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- *outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings. “*

1.15 Section 16 of the NPPF concerns conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 189 states that heritage assets are, *“an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”.*

1.16 The site is located within the north western corner of St Ann’s Conservation Area and close to the adjoining Parsonage Gardens Conservation Area. Whilst there are no listed buildings within the site, the Grade II* Barton Arcade is located to the immediate south. Heritage is an intrinsic part of townscape assessment therefore direct and indirect effects on heritage assets have been considered from as part of this assessment. Heritage is considered within this assessment as part of the townscape character only. It does not constitute a heritage assessment, and therefore there is no consideration of heritage matters such as ‘setting’. Refer to the Heritage Statement submitted as part of the application.

GUIDANCE

1.17 The following guidance has been used in the assessment;

- Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013. Landscape Institute and IEMA;
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note 06/19. Landscape Institute.
- Planning Practice Guidance;
- IEMA Environmental Impact Assessment Guide to Shaping Quality Development, 2015, and:

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY MANCHESTER'S LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK, CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (2012)

- 1.18 Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012. Relevant policies from the Strategy for the purposes of this chapter are outlined below.

POLICY EN1: DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIC CHARACTER AREAS

- 1.19 All development in Manchester will be expected to follow the seven principles of urban design, as identified in national planning guidance and listed above and have regard to the strategic character area in which the development is located. Opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the City should be fully realised, particularly on major radial and orbital road and rail routes.
- 1.20 The City Centre contains a rich legacy, which reflects its urban evolution to the current day and includes listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and an historic street pattern. Its core area presents a particularly dense environment that accommodates a wide and closely integrated range of uses including commercial, civic and residential activities.
- Historic England Advice Note 4 Tall Buildings.
 - Developers will be expected to consider the City's heritage and continue the rich pattern of activity in the core area.
 - While there will be opportunities to create landmark buildings, developments should also contribute positively to the experience of all at street level.
 - Wherever possible the opportunity should be realised to enhance existing and provide new areas of meaningful open space, and the maintenance and improvement of the City's permeability should be considered in all proposals.

POLICY EN3: HERITAGE

- 1.21 *"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."*
- 1.22 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.

- 1.23 Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

POLICY CC9: DESIGN AND HERITAGE

- 1.24 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 EN9: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1.25 New development will be expected to maintain existing green infrastructure in terms of its quantity, quality and multiple function. Where the opportunity arises and in accordance with current Green Infrastructure Strategies the Council will encourage developers to enhance the quality and quantity of green infrastructure, improve the performance of its functions and create and improve linkages to and between areas of green infrastructure. Where the benefits of a proposed development are considered to outweigh the loss of an existing element of green infrastructure, the developer will be required to demonstrate how this loss will be mitigated in terms of quantity, quality, function and future management.
- 1.26 The Council will seek to protect existing street trees and promote new planting, particularly where this can enhance green links in the urban area.
- 1.27 The provision of new, and improvements to the quality and accessibility of existing green infrastructure assets, to mitigate for any loss of green infrastructure.

PLACE MAKING AND DESIGN

- 1.28 In accordance with NPPF development in Manchester will be expected to follow the seven design principles set out below:
- Character: a place with its own identity.
 - Continuity and enclosure: a place where public and private places are clearly distinguished.
 - Quality of the public realm: a place with attractive, and successful outdoor areas.
 - Ease of movement: a place that is easy to get to and move through.
 - Legibility: a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand.
 - Adaptability: a place that can change easily.
 - Diversity: a place with variety and choice.

CITY CENTRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2018

- 1.29 The City Centre Strategic Plan seeks to:

- Demonstrate what has been achieved since the last Strategic Plan was published in 2009
 - Update the vision for the city centre within the current economic and strategic context
 - Outline the direction of travel and key priorities over the next few years in each of the city centre neighbourhoods
 - Describe the partnerships in place to deliver those priorities.
- 1.30 The Strategic Plan aims to shape the activity that will ensure the city centre continues to consolidate its role as a major economic and cultural asset for Greater Manchester and the North of England.
- 1.31 The site is located within the 'Retail Core' area, as defined within the Strategy. The city centre is a major retail hub within the UK and is a major tourism attractor for the wider city region. The Strategy states that a key priority for the city is to realise the redevelopment of the Ramada complex.

RAMADA COMPLEX MANCHESTER – STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORK

- 1.32 In May 2018, Manchester City Council Executive endorsed, a Strategic Regeneration Framework for the "Ramada Complex", on the site currently occupied by the Renaissance Hotel and including 39 Deansgate. This area represents the last parcel to be regenerated, completing the post- 1999 vision for the City Centre Renewal Area Masterplan. The purpose of the Framework is to guide the future regeneration of land adjoining Blackfriars/Deansgate and the River Irwell.
- 1.33 Whilst the site currently has an economic function as a hotel and car park, it visually and physically represents a significant blight on this part of the City Centre.
- 1.34 The vision for the SRF area is to deliver a distinctive new City Centre destination focused around a 'best in class' landscaped public space, which positively interfaces with Deansgate and the River Irwell, connecting the site into the surrounding City Centre context, alongside high quality buildings that accommodate high quality and distinctive uses, to create a genuine sense of place.
- 1.35 The Framework sets out a number of development principles relating to the site, which are summarised below:
- **Place making** - public realm treatments will be of the highest possible quality. The public space will provide the setting for a mix of high quality city centre uses. The opportunity for distinctiveness can also be drawn from the ability to re-connect the site to its historic setting, permeability at and around the site's edges whilst maximising views to local assets such as Manchester Cathedral, the River Irwell and Deansgate. The quality and

distinctiveness of the architecture will complement the existing and future skyline of the City at a key City Centre intersection, will allow engagement with both the river and the Cathedral, and will promote a scheme that is transformational and distinctive.

- **Best in Class Uses:** The proposed development will be high quality, distinctive and add value to the City Centre's current offer.
- **Scale and Density:** High density of development with great emphasis on the high quality of the place making. In terms of height, it is envisaged that this should step up away from the Cathedral, and the distribution of height across the site will respond to the need for good levels of sunlight and daylight to dwellings, amenity spaces and public open spaces, as well as provide opportunities to create views through the site.
- **Rebalancing Deansgate:** Creating a quality, pedestrian dominated public space on Deansgate north of St Mary's Gate.
- **Environment and Sustainability:** The development principles include a number of objectives to ensure that the development is accessible to all, creates a safe and secure environment, and promotes future adaptability and resilience to climate change.

1.36 The Framework states that, *"The existing monolithic concrete buildings lack architectural or townscape merit, and act as a visual and physical barrier between the City Centre and the River Irwell/Salford and towards the Medieval Quarter. The existing buildings make no positive visual contribution to the surrounding environment"*.

METHODOLOGY

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 1.37 This assessment has been carried out with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013 (referred to hereafter as “the Guidelines”). The photography for the assessment was carried out by a professional photographer who has considerable experience in the production of photography in accordance with Landscape Institute Guidance. The photomontages were produced by Virtual Planit a specialist visualisation studio with over 20 years experience in producing visualisations for the purposes of TVIAs. They were produced in accordance with the Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representations of Development Proposals. Refer to Appendix 5 for the full methodology used for the production of photomontages.
- 1.38 A three-stage assessment process has been adopted. Firstly, the nature of receptors (sensitivity) have been assessed, and secondly, the nature of effects (magnitude) likely to result from the proposed development have been assessment. From this, the overall significance of the identified effects on receptors have been assessed. The assessment will utilise the methodology tables set out below (**Table 1 – 8**) alongside professional judgement.
- 1.39 The study area for this assessment is illustrated in **Figure 3.1** in **Appendix 3**. The assessment has considered the proposed development against the site as it currently stands, the existing commercial building and ground floor retail uses.
- 1.40 A ZVI for the Proposed Development using the Google Viewshed facility was used to inform the selection of viewpoints in addition to a process of desktop study using Ordnance Survey mapping, aerial photography, Google Streetview and topographical maps. In order to identify potentially sensitive receptors, reference was made to local planning policy and Historic England. The selected viewpoints were then investigated on site, and amended as required. After being photographed by a professional photographer, the views were then ‘tested’ using a block model placed accurately within Google Earth to ensure that each viewpoint location accurately represents ‘worst case scenario’, as required by the Guidelines. Any key viewpoint locations or photography were then revised or reshot if required.
- 1.41 The process for selecting key views was carried out in accordance with the Guidelines, with input from the planning consultant and heritage consultant to ensure the viewpoint selection included representative viewpoints, relevant specific viewpoints where present, and appropriate illustrative viewpoints. The finalised viewpoints selection was provided to the Local Authority for comment.

- 1.42 The comprehensive viewpoint selection process and testing allowed viewpoints from Piccadilly Gardens to be scoped out of the assessment. No views were available from Albert Square at the time of the assessment due to the timing of the application. The Square was in use for the Christmas Markets and therefore photography was not possible. However, ZVI and desktop analysis indicated that there would be no likely significant visual effects from within the Square.
- 1.43 In order to provide the most comprehensive, rounded and objective view of the Townscape and Visual Impacts of the proposed development, assessed effects have been agreed following round-table review by a team of individual assessors.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING SENSITIVITY OF TOWNSCAPE RECEPTORS

BASELINE TOWNSCAPE VALUE

- 1.44 Townscapes may be valued at community, local, national level or above. Existing Townscape designations have been taken as the starting point for this assessment, as shown in **Table 1** below. However, the value attached to undesignated townscapes also needs to be assessed and this is considered in **Table 2**.
- 1.45 **Table 1** sets out the relative importance of generic townscape designations and descriptions.

Table 1: Value of Designated Townscapes

Value	Description
High	Sites, features or areas of national or international importance with settings of high quality such as World Heritage Site, AONB, National Parks, Grade I and Grade II* Listed buildings or Registered Parks and Gardens.
Medium	Sites, features or areas of local or regional importance with intact character such as Grade II* and Grade II Listed Buildings or Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, local nature site, long distance recreational routes. Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and local designations that exhibit wider geographic, cultural or townscape significance.
Low	Areas or features of local importance such as Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), Public Right of Way (PROW) and locally listed buildings.

- 1.46 Whilst the assessment of value is partly based on the Planning Policy importance of the townscape, other criteria used to assess townscape value in more detail, including that of undesignated townscape, are set out in **Table 2** below. The criteria are taken from the Planning Practice Guidance which supports the National Planning Policy Framework.

Table 2: Criteria for Assessing the Value of Non-Designated Townscapes

Attribute	Criteria
Functional	A building or place should be fit for purpose, designed and delivered in a way that delivers the intended function and achieves value for money in terms of lifetime costs.
Mix of uses	Mix of uses to ensure easy access to facilities and encourage a healthier environment, reducing the need to travel.
Well-designed public space	Functional and attractive hard and soft landscape elements, well orientated and designed routes, inclusion of facilities such as seats and play equipment and public art.
Buildings designed to be adaptable.	Flexibility to be able to respond to a range of future needs – how easily buildings change be adapted for change of use, places that are easy and practical to manage with good access, natural surveillance and hard wearing materials that are easy to repair.
Distinctive character	Consideration of: the local pattern of street blocks and plots; building forms; details and materials; style and vernacular.
Attractive spaces	Consideration of streetscapes, townscapes, buildings and elements within them all, microclimates and views should all be considered. This is also affected by the way a townscape is perceived using the senses and the effect of transient elements such as the presence of human activity and resulting tranquillity or vibrancy.
Promotes ease of movement	All users should be able to move safely, conveniently and efficiently to and within a place, appropriate number of legible routes to and through it, good connections with each other and other destinations.

- 1.47 An overall assessment of value has been made for each townscape receptors (refer to **Appendix 1**), based on an overview of the assessments made using each of the above criteria, in terms of high, medium and low value.

BASELINE SUSCEPTIBILITY OF TOWNSCAPE RECEPTORS TO CHANGE

- 1.48 Susceptibility of townscape receptors to change has been assessed using the criteria identified in **Table 3**, with reference to the baseline conditions.

Table 3: Townscape Receptor Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	Little ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm.
Medium	Some ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm.
Low	Substantial ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm.

OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF TOWNSCAPE RECEPTORS

- 1.49 The assessment of receptor sensitivity combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of development proposed and the value attributed to that receptor, as detailed within **Appendix 1**.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING SENSITIVITY OF VISUAL RECEPTORS

TYPE OF VIEW AND NUMBER OF VIEWERS

- 1.50 In terms of assessing the baseline visual sensitivity, key factors to consider are the type of view and the likely numbers of viewers (the visual receptors). The type of view and the number of viewers are described in the following terms

- Glimpsed (i.e. in passing)/Filtered/Oblique/Framed/Open Views; and
- Few/Moderate/Many Viewers

VALUE OF VIEWS

- 1.51 The value attached to views has regard to a number of factors, including:
- recognition through planning designations or heritage assets; and
 - the popularity of the viewpoint, its appearance in guidebooks, literature or art, on tourist maps and the facilities provided for its enjoyment.
- 1.52 The assessment of the value of views is summarised in **Table 4** below, in terms of High, Medium and Low value. These criteria are provided for guidance only and are not intended to be absolute.

Table 4: Value Attached to Views

Value	Criteria
High	Views from townscapes/viewpoints of national importance, or highly popular visitor attractions where the view forms an important part of the experience, or with important cultural associations.
Medium	Views from townscapes/viewpoints of regional/district importance or moderately popular visitor attractions where the view forms part of the experience, or with local cultural associations.
Low	Views from townscapes/viewpoints with limited designations, not particularly popular as a viewpoint and with minimal or no cultural associations.

SUSCEPTIBILITY OF VISUAL RECEPTORS TO CHANGE

- 1.53 The susceptibility of different types of visual receptor to changes in views is mainly a result of:

- The occupation or activity of the viewer at a given location; and
- The extent to which a person's attention or interest may therefore be focussed on a view and the visual amenity experienced at a given view.

1.54 The assessment of a visual receptor to change is specific to the proposed development. However, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment offers the generic guidance identified in **Table 5** as a starting point for the assessment.

Table 5: Visual Receptor Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility	Type of Receptor
High	• Users of public space, including users of public rights of way, whose attention is likely to be focussed on the townscape and on particular views; • Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important part of the experience; • Communities where views contribute to the townscape setting enjoyed by residents; and • Travellers on scenic routes.
Medium	• Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes, where the view is moderately important to the quality of the journey; and • Users of public space, where the view is a part of the wider experience of the place.
Low	• People at their place of work, where the setting is not important to the quality of working life; • Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes, where the view is fleeting and incidental to the journey; and • People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, or users of a public space, which does not involve appreciation of views.

1.55 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment qualifies the above examples as follows:

'This division is not black and white and in reality there will be a gradation in susceptibility to change. Each project needs to consider the nature of the groups of people who will be affected and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focussed on views and visual amenity.' (**page 114, paragraph 6.35**).

OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF VISUAL RECEPTORS

1.56 The assessment of receptor sensitivity combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of development proposed and the value attributed to that receptor, as detailed in **Appendix 2**.

PREDICTED TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT CRITERIA

- 1.57 The predicted townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development are set out in **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2** respectively.

SIZE AND SCALE OF EFFECTS

- 1.58 The size and/or scale of effects relates to the scale of physical changes in the townscape and the scale of the visible change in views, such as the loss or addition of features. This is broadly rated along the following scale:

- No Change – change will not be perceptible
- Negligible – change will be just discernible
- Minor – a small change will be perceptible
- Moderate – change will be clearly noticeable
- Major – total change will occur

GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT OF EFFECTS

- 1.59 The geographical extent of effects relates to:
- the area over which townscape effects are likely to be experienced, i.e. this could be at the site level, the immediate locality, across a neighbourhood or across a series of neighbourhoods (city-wide);
 - the area over which the changes are likely to be visible, i.e. viewpoint within the site, viewpoint within the immediate locality, viewpoint across/ through a neighbourhood or a vista or vantage point across neighbourhoods or the city skyline (city-wide).

DURATION/ REVERSIBILITY

- 1.60 Effects may be experienced over a range of timescales. For this assessment, the following timescales are considered appropriate:
- Short-term: 1 year or below
 - Medium-term: Between 1 and 10 years in duration
 - Long-term: Greater than 10 years in duration
- 1.61 Effects may be temporary, permanent or reversible over time. For example, visual effects arising from construction activities may be limited solely to the construction period and therefore only temporary. The assessment therefore considers the practicality of effects being reversed.

MAGNITUDE OF TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

- 1.62 The magnitude of a townscape effect is assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced by that effect, its duration and degree of reversibility and the impact these are likely to have on the baseline character of the townscape element.
- 1.63 The magnitude of change in the townscape takes into consideration the following factors:
- the extent/proportion of townscape elements lost or added;
 - the contribution of that element to townscape character and the degree to which aesthetic/perceptual aspects are altered; and
 - whether the effect is likely to change the key characteristics of the townscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.
- 1.64 The criteria used to assess magnitude of townscape effects are described in **Table 6**, below:

Table 6: Townscape Effects - Magnitude

Category	Criteria
Major adverse townscape effect	The proposals will result in a total change in the key characteristics of townscape character; will introduce elements totally uncharacteristic to the attributes of the receiving townscape; and/or will result in a substantial or total loss, alteration or addition of key elements/features/characteristics.
Moderate adverse townscape effect	The proposals will result in a partial change in the key characteristics of townscape character; will introduce elements partially uncharacteristic to the attributes of the receiving townscape; and/or will result in partial loss, alteration or addition of key elements/features/characteristics.
Minor adverse townscape effect	The proposals will result in a small change in the key characteristics of townscape character; will introduce elements that are not uncharacteristic to the attributes of the receiving townscape; and/or will result in a minor loss, alteration or addition of elements/features/characteristics.
Negligible adverse townscape effect	The proposals will result in a just discernible change to townscape character/elements/features/characteristics.
Negligible townscape benefit	The proposals will result in a just discernible improvement to the townscape character/elements/features/characteristics.
Minor townscape benefit	The proposals will achieve a degree of fit with the townscape character/elements/features/characteristics and go some way towards improving the condition or character of the townscape.
Moderate townscape benefit	The proposals will achieve a good fit with the townscape character/elements/features/characteristics, or would noticeably improve the condition or character of the townscape.

Major townscape benefit	The proposals will totally accord with the townscape character/elements/features/characteristics, or would restore, recreate or permanently benefit the condition or character of the townscape.
No Change	The proposals will not cause any change to the townscape character/ elements/ features/ characteristics.

MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL EFFECTS

- 1.65 The magnitude of a visual effect is assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced by that effect, its duration and degree of reversibility and the impact these are likely to have on the baseline character of the view.
- 1.66 The magnitude of change in the view relates to the degree of contrast or integration likely to result from the proposed development and is influenced by the relative time over which a view is experienced and whether it is a full, partial or glimpsed view.
- 1.67 The criteria identified in **Table 7** are used to assess the magnitude of visual effects, based on the degree of change to the view or composition.

Table 7: Visual Effects - Magnitude

Category	Criteria
Major adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a dominant or complete change or contrast to the view, resulting from the loss or addition of substantial features in the view and will substantially alter the appreciation of the view.
Moderate adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a clearly noticeable change or contrast to the view, which would have some effect on the composition, resulting from the loss or addition of features in the view and will noticeably alter the appreciation of the view.
Minor adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a perceptible change or contrast to the view, but which would not materially affect the composition or the appreciation of the view.
Negligible adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a barely perceptible change or contrast to the view, which would not affect the composition or the appreciation of the view.
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the view.

NATURE OF EFFECTS

- 1.68 The nature of effects may be positive or negative (beneficial or adverse) or neutral. Neutral effects recognise that there will be a change to the receptors, however this change is in keeping with the existing characteristics of the receptor and is neither adverse nor positive but may incorporate a combination of both. Whether an effect is beneficial, neutral or adverse is identified based on

professional judgement. GLVIA 3rd edition indicates at paragraph 2.15 that this is a “particularly challenging” aspect of assessment, especially in the context of a changing landscape.

- 1.69 Effects may also be direct or indirect. Direct effects are those which result directly from a development itself, whereas indirect effects may arise as a consequential change resulting from development.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

- 1.70 As a non EIA assessment, reporting of the potential significance of effects is provided for information only. Reference to EIA significance criteria, are provided to explain assessment methodology only.
- 1.71 The scale shown in **Table 8** is used to guide the assessment of the significance of both townscape and visual effects, from a combination of the assessment of receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of effects:

Table 8: Assessment of Townscape or Visual Significance

		Magnitude of Effect				
		Major Effect	Moderate Effect	Minor Effect	Negligible Effect	No Change
Sensitivity of Receptor	High	Significant	Moderately Significant	Moderately Significant	Minor Significance	Not Significant
	Medium	Moderately Significant	Moderately Significant	Minor Significance	Not Significant	Not Significant
	Low	Moderately Significant	Minor Significance	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant

- 1.72 The table has regard to guidance in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, 2013, at paragraph 5.56, page 92 (significance of landscape effects) and paragraph 6.44, page 116 (significance of visual effects). This matrix is used as a guide to determine significance, along with professional judgement.

CONFIDENCE

- 1.73 The predicted effect is assessed against the criteria set out below in order to attribute a level of confidence to the visual assessment:

- High – The predicted effect is either certain, or very likely to occur, based on reliable information or previous experience
- Medium – The predicted effect and its level are best estimates, based on on-site and desktop study
- Low – The predicted effect and its level are best estimates, based on given knowledge and experience. More information may be needed to improve the level of confidence.

CONSULTATION

1.74 The principal viewpoints were identified through a process of desktop study and on-site survey, and were then reviewed by Local Planning Authority officers. No changes were made to the viewpoints as a result of consultation.

1.75 The following consultation activities were undertaken in support of the determination of the previous planning application:

- Response to Renotification – July 2020. Summary of activity – Email confirmation of updates to LVIA report and no changes made to the assessment– Individual/ Organisation - Carolyn Parry MCC.
- Assessment Comparison table 21st August 2020. Summary of activity - Further confirmation of no changes to LVIA assessment. Individual/ Organisation - Carolyn Parry MCC

ASSUMPTIONS/LIMITATIONS

1.76 The following limitations and assumptions have been identified:

- The assessment relies on available data, and best endeavours have been made to ensure that the data are accurate and up to date. It is assumed that OS mapping information, topographic and 3D data and Historic England heritage mapping information are all up to date.
- The GLVIA methodology provides a robust and transparent process for assessment of townscape and visual effects, and is used alongside visually verified photomontages which provide a high level of detail and technical accuracy. Significant effects will be determined through professional judgment, carried out by a team of assessors to provide scrutiny where this is relied upon.

BASELINE CONDITIONS

SITE LOCATION

- 1.77 The Site is irregular in shape and comprises an area of around 0.12 ha (1,227sqm). It is bound by Deansgate to the West, St Mary's Gate to the North, the Grade II* listed Barton Arcade to the South and by 12-14 St Mary's Gate to the East. It situated within the St Ann's Conservation Area.
- 1.78 39 Deansgate is currently occupied by an 9-storey mixed use building known as 'Speakers' House', built in 1963 and designed by the architectural practice of Douglas Stephen & Partners. It has been refurbished numerous times over the years most recently in 2013 when new cladding was added to the main shop front façades. The existing building has a net area of 3,754m² (40,408sq. ft) with accommodation arranged over ground, mezzanine, and eight upper floors. The ground floor, circa 1,116m² (12,013sq. ft) is occupied by a variety of retail tenants whilst the upper floors are currently used as offices, with an area in excess of 2,638m² (28,395sq. ft).
- 1.79 The Site is currently serviced by an alley leading to a yard accessed via the pedestrianised Exchange Street/ St. Ann's Square to the East.
- 1.80 The site is located within the north western corner of St Ann's Conservation Area and close to the adjoining Parsonage Gardens Conservation Area. Immediately to the south of the Site is the Grade II* Barton Arcade.
- 1.81 The Bartons Building and Arcade consists of a block of shops and offices enclosing shopping arcades, and was built in 1871. The building is characterised by cast-iron and glass frontage with a facing of sandstone ashlar, with a slate and glass roof. It is 4 storeys in height with an attic, with the ground and 1st floor treated as a single story. The Building and Arcade are high quality and ornately detailed, and form part of the rich history of Manchester City Centre. The shop frontages at ground level fronting onto Deansgate provide active frontage and visual interest along this primary pedestrian and vehicular route.
- 1.82 The wider area surrounding the Site comprises a range of City Centre uses including residential apartments, hotels, retail units, offices and food and beverage outlets. Most notably, the Renaissance Hotel opposite the site, is a large hotel building complex currently proposed for a new mixed use redevelopment, and a significant building frontage on Deansgate. A number of current planning applications are active but undetermined within the site, including demolition of Premier House and redevelopment for Tree House Hotel. A proposed new residential tower (Deansgate/ Victoria Bridge) is also currently being consulted on.

- 1.83 The site is positioned on the main City Arterial thoroughfare of Deansgate. This is currently being consulted on for a new balanced street scheme that would see generous new public realm spaces created in front of the Site from BlackFriars Street to King Street.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1.84 The 1922 plan (Appendix 3, Figure 3.2) shows dense development within the site, with two large footprint buildings forming a continuous building line along Deansgate and St Mary's Gate to the north. The buildings help to define the corner, and emphasise the importance of this key junction.
- 1.85 By 1956, the site had been cleared, along with the historic Victoria Hotel and Victoria Buildings to the north, and Market Place/Old Millgate to the north east. The key route along the northern end of Deansgate and east to west along Blackfriars and Market Street was poorly enclosed by built form, and lack legibility. Buildings in this area were destroyed in 1940, during the Second World War and eventually cleared.
- 1.86 The existing development on the site dates from the 1960s, and was refurbished in 2013. The existing building has active frontages at ground level, but otherwise does little to address this key junction. The relationship between the existing 39 Deansgate and the adjacent Grade II* listed Bartons Building is also very poor, due to the minor setback of 39 Deansgate from the strong building line created by the Bartons Building. In addition, 39 Deansgate does not respond to materials, form, scale/massing, architectural detailing or proportions of the Bartons Building.

TOWNSCAPE RECEPTORS

- 1.87 Refer to **Appendix 1** for the baseline description of townscape receptors and the assessment of sensitivity for each receptor. The list below highlights the townscape receptors assessed in relation to the proposed development:

- Heritage Designations (as a component of the townscape fabric);
- Townscape Character;
- Urban Grain;
- Land Use;
- Building Heights;
- Topography and Flood Risk;
- Movement and Linkages;
- Environmental Designations and Public Open Space, and;
- Site Character.

VISUAL RECEPTORS

1.88 A total of 10 principal viewpoints have been defined and are outlined below. Refer to **Appendix 2** for a baseline description of each viewpoints and an assessment of sensitivity. **Figure 3.11** of **Appendix 3** illustrates the location of each of the principal viewpoints as follows:

- Viewpoint 1: View from the south-eastern corner of St Ann's Square facing north-west.
- Viewpoint 2: View from Victoria Street facing south Deansgate.
- Viewpoint 3: View from Blackfriars Street bridge facing east.
- Viewpoint 4: View from Deansgate adjacent to Kendals facing north.
- Viewpoint 5: View from the south-western corner of Parsonage Gardens facing north-east.
- Viewpoint 6: View from the junction of Market Street and Corporation Street facing west.
- Viewpoint 7: View from King Street facing north along Police Street.
- Viewpoint 8: View from Cathedral Gardens facing south.
- Viewpoint 9: View from Deansgate from Spinningfields Square facing North.
- Viewpoint 10: View from Deansgate adjacent to the Bartons Buildings facing north.

1.89 Refer to **Appendix 4** for the baseline photography for each identified viewpoint.

EMBEDDED MITIGATION

1.90 'Embedded mitigation' is a form of mitigation that has been incorporated into the design of the development through an iterative design process, effectively 'designing out' potentially significant effects.

CONSTRUCTION

1.91 A construction management plan for the proposals has been produced and details mitigation measure relating to townscape and views that have been embedded within the construction programme. The measures relevant to townscape and visual impact are set out in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Summary of Embedded Construction Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measures	Effects
Restricted hours of operation.	Reduce the townscape and visual impact of construction during unsociable hours, and on Sundays or Bank Holidays.
Maintenance of a clean and tidy site.	Minimises potential adverse visual effects by presenting an acceptable visual impression to the workforce, visitors and the general public.
Material and equipment will only be delivered to site as required to reduce the required storage space.	Minimises potential adverse visual effects of material stockpiles.

Site hoarding erected and maintained at the site boundary.	Minimises potential adverse visual effects at street level.
A vehicle holding area will be formed to prevent delivery vehicles from obstructing the highway.	Minimises potential adverse townscape effects of construction traffic on movement.
Enclosed scaffolding providing screening.	Minimises potential adverse visual effects of demolition works.
Consideration will be given to the delivery, loading and offloading of materials.	Minimises potential adverse townscape effects of construction traffic on movement.

COMPLETED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.92 The design proposals have been formulated through a lengthy iterative process incorporating environmental assessment and consultation. This process has allowed site constraints and opportunities to directly influence the evolution of the proposals. As a result, mitigation measures form part of the detailed design.
- 1.93 The proposal has been developed in accordance with good design principles which avoids, reduces or offsets potential effects on the townscape and views. These are described in full within the Design and Access Statement which accompanies this application and the key principles relevant to the purposes of this report are summarised below.
- Active uses at ground floor with proposed retail use in accordance with principles of good urban design and the SRF.
 - Prominent main entrance centrally located fronting onto Deansgate in order to aid legibility.
 - Servicing from the existing access road to the rear in order to avoid adverse impacts on views and movement.
 - Cycle storage facilities with shower and change facilities in order to encourage green travel and facilitate the wider aspirations of the city's movement network.
 - The Proposed Development aims to complete the urban block, creating a strong corner to define the prominent site. The scale responds to the pre-dominant four-five storey eaves datum by establishing a strong base to tie into the existing street scene.
 - The Proposed Development steps out beyond the existing building line to re-establish the continuous building frontage along Deansgate. This re-emphasises the strong urban grain which is characteristic of the area.
 - The local area is interspersed by taller buildings, particularly around the junction. The total height will be 17 storeys, with additional external plant and screening at roof level. The proposed Ramada Complex, alongside No.1 Deansgate and the proposal for 39 Deansgate will create a node of taller buildings around the key axis between St Mary's Gate, Deansgate and Blackfriars Street.

- The façade of the Proposed Development aims to subtly interpret the surrounding Victorian context, most notably the adjacent Bartons Building. Tonal aluminium will give a crisp, clean finish reflective of contemporary construction techniques and modernity. It would also give a sharp contrast in light and shade across the subtly folded profiled piers and banding. As part of the decentralised ventilation strategy, insulated spandrel panels with concealed vents at intermediate floor junctions will be overlaid with decorative metal screens. They are envisaged to reflect the layering effect of the delicate ironwork on Barton Arcade.

POTENTIAL EFFECTS

- 1.94 The predicted potential impacts of the proposed development, taking into account the embedded mitigation are outlined in **Appendix 1** (Townscape receptors) and **Appendix 2** (Visual receptors). The potential impacts have been considered at both construction stage and during operation for the proposed development. The assessment is supplemented by **Appendix 3** (Townscape and Visual Figures) and **Appendix 4** (Baseline Photography and Photomontages).

SUPPLEMENTARY MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

- 1.95 Given the nature of the iterative design process leading to the extent of embedded mitigation into the design, the requirement for supplementary mitigation is limited. The mitigation measures described below are focussed on ensuring that the management and maintenance of the scheme limits any further adverse townscape and visual effects.

CONSTRUCTION

- 1.96 The implementation of good site management, maintenance and housekeeping would ensure that the temporary deterioration to townscape character and visual amenity will be kept to a practical minimum. Despite these better practice measures, there would still remain inevitable adverse effects during construction works.

COMPLETED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.97 A management plan may be employed to provide further mitigation and maintenance once the site is operational.

RESIDUAL EFFECTS

- 1.98 The extent of mitigation 'designed in' to the Proposed Development means that townscape and visual effects are likely to remain as residual effects after any supplementary mitigation has been implemented.
- 1.99 The results of the townscape and visual assessment are set out in full within **Appendices 1 and 2**.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 1.100 A cumulative assessment has been carried out as part of this assessment. A total of 19 proposed schemes were considered within a 500m radius of the site. Of these, only those schemes that have an approved planning application have been considered. All others have been scoped out of the cumulative assessment. The majority of the remaining schemes have been assessed as having no potential visual relationship with the site, and do not have the potential to impact on the townscape character around the site. They were therefore scoped out of the cumulative assessment.

1.101 There are therefore 3 remaining schemes that have been considered as part of the cumulative assessment and these are as follows:

- **17/70626/FUL** Embankment West, Salford.
- **19/74205/FULEIA** One Heritage.
- **128045/VO/2020** Cathedral public realm & 22nd May Memorial Garden

1.102 The first two schemes have been modelled in accordance with Landscape Institute Guidance with information derived from submitted planning documents. Photomontages from the key viewpoints have demonstrated that there will be no visibility of either of the schemes from any of the key viewpoints. There will therefore be no cumulative visual effects from these new buildings. Cathedral Gardens is a public realm improvement scheme, and has the potential to result in positive cumulative effects on views 2 & 8 by improving the immediate view setting and context with a high quality public realm and new planting.

1.103 Both building schemes are located outside the immediate townscape character area containing the Proposed Development, and there are therefore not predicted to be any cumulative townscape effects. Cathedral Gardens is within the immediate townscape approximately 150m north of the site and has the potential to result in positive cumulative townscape effects from the enhanced setting and public open space.

1.104 Consideration of the Ramada SRF has been given as part of the cumulative assessment. However, it is not possible to produce visualisations that would allow a cumulative visual assessment. The Proposed Development is in accordance with the vision outlined in the SRF, and therefore has the potential to result in positive cumulative townscape effects.

SUMMARY

- 1.105 This report has assessed the townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development. The assessment has been carried out with reference to the Landscape Institute's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition.
- 1.106 A three-stage assessment process has been adopted. Firstly, the nature of receptors (sensitivity) have been assessed, and secondly, the nature of the effects (magnitude) likely to result from the proposed development have been assessed. From this the overall significance of the identified effects on receptors have been assessed.
- 1.107 The proposals have been formulated through a lengthy iterative process involving environmental assessment and consultation. This process has allowed site constraints and opportunities to directly influence development proposals. As a result, mitigation measures form part of the detailed design.
- 1.108 A total of eight townscape receptors were identified and considered as part of this assessment at the construction and operational phase of development. The following impacts are summarised from **Appendix 1** (Townscape receptors):
- **Beneficial townscape impacts** - Six receptors experienced beneficial impacts during the operational phase. Of these, Heritage Designations, Urban Grain and Movement & Linkages were considered to experience minor beneficial impacts. Townscape Character – Retail Core and Building Heights were considered to experience moderate beneficial impacts whilst Site Character was considered to experience a major beneficial impact.
 - **Adverse townscape impacts** - Seven receptors were considered to experience adverse impacts. All seven were experienced during the construction phase. Four receptors (Heritage Designations, Townscape Character – Retail Core, Urban Grain and Building Heights) experienced minor adverse impacts. Two receptors (Land Use and Movement and Linkages) experienced negligible adverse impacts. Site Character was considered to experience a moderate adverse impact.
 - **Neutral townscape impacts** – No neutral townscape impacts were assessed.
 - **No change to the townscape** - The remaining three receptors were considered to experience no change. The Environmental Designations and Public Open Space receptor experienced no change during both the construction and operational phases whilst the Land Use receptor experienced no change during the operational phase.

1.109 A total of ten visual receptors were identified and considered as part of this assessment at the construction and operational phase of development. The following impacts are summarised from **Appendix 2** (Visual receptors):

- **Beneficial visual impacts** - Six receptors experienced beneficial operational phase impacts. Views 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9 experienced minor beneficial impacts whilst View 10 experienced moderate beneficial impacts.
- **Adverse visual impacts** - The construction phase impacts for all ten views were considered to experience adverse impacts. Of these impacts, six were considered to be minor adverse (View 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 10) and four were considered negligible adverse (View 2, 4, 8 and 9).
- **Neutral visual impacts** - At the operational phase, four views were considered to experience neutral impacts, all during the operational phase. Of these, Views 6, 7 and 8 were considered to experience minor neutral impacts whilst View 1 was considered to experience moderate neutral impacts.
- **No visual change** – No views experienced no change.

1.110 The receptors deemed to experience a significant effect are outlined below.

SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

1.111 The results of the townscape and visual assessment are set out in full within **Appendix 1** and **2**. A summary of the construction and operational phase townscape and visual effects that are predicted to be moderately significant are set out in Table 10 below.

1.112 Two townscape receptors (Townscape Character – Retail Core and Site Character) were considered to experience Moderately Significant effects. These effects were both considered during the operational phase of the development with the nature of effect deemed beneficial.

1.113 View 1 (construction phase) and View 10 (operational phase) were also considered to result in Moderately Significant effects. The construction phase effect to View 1 was considered adverse, however due to the nature of construction works, this effect is considered to be short-term and reversible, therefore further construction mitigation is not considered necessary. View 10 experienced moderate impacts during the operational phase which have resulted in Moderately Significant effects occurring of a beneficial nature.

Table 10: Moderately Significant Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude
Townscape Character – Retail Core	Medium	Operational Phase	Moderate (Beneficial)
Site Character	Low	Operational Phase	Major (Beneficial)
View 1	High	Construction Phase	Minor (Adverse)
View 10	Medium	Operational Phase	Moderate (Beneficial)

REFERENCES

- *Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021), National Planning Policy Framework.*
- *Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA), 2015. IEMA Environmental Impact Assessment Guide to Shaping Quality Development.*
- *Landscape Institute, IEMA, 2013. Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, Oxon, Routledge.*
- *Landscape Institute, 2019. Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Technical Guidance Note 06/19. London, Landscape Institute.*
- *Environmental Impact Assessment EU Directive and UK Regulations, (85/337/EEC).*

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Townscape Baseline, Sensitivity and Effects

Appendix 2: Visual Baseline, Sensitivity and Effects

Appendix 3: Townscape and Visual Figures

- **Figure 3.1:** Site Location
- **Figure 3.2:** Historical Development
- **Figure 3.3:** Heritage Designations
- **Figure 3.4:** Townscape Character
- **Figure 3.5:** Urban Grain – Existing and Proposed
- **Figure 3.6:** Land Use – Existing and Proposed
- **Figure 3.7:** Building Heights – Existing and Proposed
- **Figure 3.8:** Movement & Linkages – Existing and Proposed
- **Figure 3.9:** Public Open Space
- **Figure 3.10:** Site Character – Existing and Proposed
- **Figure 3.11:** Viewpoint Locations

Appendix 4: Baseline Photography and Photomontages

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