

Design Statement

Introduction and Background

This Design Statement has been prepared by stephenson hamilton risley STUDIO on behalf of Vie (Manchester) Management Company Ltd. The statement has been provided in support of an application for Planning Permission relating to VIE Building at 187 Water Street, Manchester, M3 4JD.

stephenson hamilton risley STUDIO have been commissioned to look at the façade refurbishment of the VIE Building to bring the façade material in line with the latest legislation following the Grenfell public enquiry. As part of the works the existing render, zinc elements and upper level Velfac window panels are to be replaced 'like for like'. All existing VELFAC windows and doors will be retained as existing.

It is, however, proposed to replace the non-compliant external timber decking and slot louvres with new PPC aluminium systems. As per Lucy Harrison's advice (email dated 14.06.2021), these 'material amendments' form the basis of the application.

Planning history

The original scheme (application reference 070806/FO/2004/C3) received planning permission in 2004 and was completed in 2011.

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The site and its context

The triangular site, with an area of 0.8 ha, occupies a prominent position at the confluence of the River Irwell and the River Medlock, to the southwest of a larger triangle of land bounded by Dawson Street and Regent Road (part of the inner ring road), within the Castlefield Conservation Area in the west of the city centre.

The existing mixed-use development is formed from two, six storey linear forms located parallel to the riverbanks – the 'Irwell Block' and the 'Medlock Block'. The Irwell Block is surmounted by a seven-storey tower giving the development landmark proportions.

The development comprises 207 apartments, two live/work units and a single commercial unit at the apex of the site.

Both the Irwell and Medlock Blocks are set back from the river's edge to allow a public walkway which opens out into a public garden with a raised private deck at the 'pointed' end of the site. The two blocks contain an internal courtyard which is a private landscaped area for the residents. Car domination is avoided by basement and undercroft parking.

The elevations are modelled to create projecting glazed bays and balconies that achieve views down river. The courtyard facing elevations are simpler in their modelling with Juliet balconies.



Existing materiality

Materials for the original scheme were chosen to reinforce the contemporary nature of the development. Walls are generally natural white render, with zinc cladding to the projecting 'fins', bay windows, stair cores and tower element to the Irwell Block.

To contrast with the render, the balconies are galvanised structural steelwork with mesh infill panels and hardwood timber plank decking.

Hardwood timber slot 'louvres' provide ventilation to the refuse chute lobbies facing the internal courtyard and are decorative elements to the river-side elevations (image below).



View of Irwell Block

Proposed material fabric alterations

As the new regulations ban the use of combustible materials in external wall systems and balconies for buildings over 18 meters, the existing timber elements on the scheme are to be removed and replaced with materials that are A2-s1, d0 rated or Class A1 under the European classification system (Euroclass) set out in the standard BS EN 13501-1.

Decking to balconies and terrace areas:

Refer to enclosed proposed detail drawing al(05)0060.

Aluminium has been selected for the replacement decking as it is A1 rated. It also has a wide range of other benefits including a recognised design life of at least 60-100 years, it is maintenance-free, corrosive-free and 100% recyclable.

The AliDeck system has been selected as it has been developed with the benefit of decades of experience in aluminium extrusion and has been utilised on many high-quality projects in the Manchester area, including similar façade refurbishment projects. The AliDeck range is fully compliant with all recent fire legislation changes, fully tested and certified for slip and wear resistance. It also comes with a 30-year product warranty.

Although AliDeck is the manufacturer we have been liaising with, there are many other manufacturers with a similar product offering. Therefore, as noted on the design drawings, the specific decking product is to be confirmed following the appointment of the main contractor and subsequent confirmation of their preferred manufacturer.

The selected product is the 'Junior Balcony board' in RAL 7039 Quartz Grey. Without trying to imitate the original timber finish, this is a soft neutral shade which we believe will work well with the existing material palette and the proposed Burnt Umber RAL 7022 shade proposed for the louvres.

Please refer to al(05)0203 for images of existing and proposed decking.

Louvres to projecting bays on river-side elevations and to refuse chute lobbies facing the internal courtyard:

Refer to enclosed:

Existing projecting bay slot louvre detail - 7564-al(05)0061

Proposed projecting bay slot louvre detail - 7564-al(05)0062

Existing refuse chute slot louvre detail - 7564-al(05)0063

Proposed refuse chute slot louvre detail - 7564-al(05)0064

PPC aluminium has again been selected for the credentials listed above.

The proposed replacement louvre is a PPC aluminium louvres from 'Premo Fabrications'.

This system has aluminium blades set at 45 degrees within an aluminium angle frame. The framed assemblies will run floor to floor, abutted to replicate the existing arrangement. All fixings will be concealed; located at the rear of the angle frame.

The proposed finish is PPC RAL 7022 Umber Grey matt. This grey / bronze shade has a natural appearance, similar to the tone of the existing weathered timber (image below). We believe this will work well with the existing material palette.

As well as providing a decorative feature on the building these louvres also fulfil a performance requirement on the internal courtyard elevation, providing ventilation to the refuse chute lobby and supply duct for the protected fire lobby within the refuse room. See detail 7564-al(05)0064.

Again, this specific product is to be confirmed following the appointment of the main contractor and subsequent confirmation of their preferred manufacturer.



Image of existing louvres (left)

Image of proposed louvre aesthetic - installed at John Dalton House, Deansgate (right). Note these are not the proposed RAL 7022 'Umber Grey'.

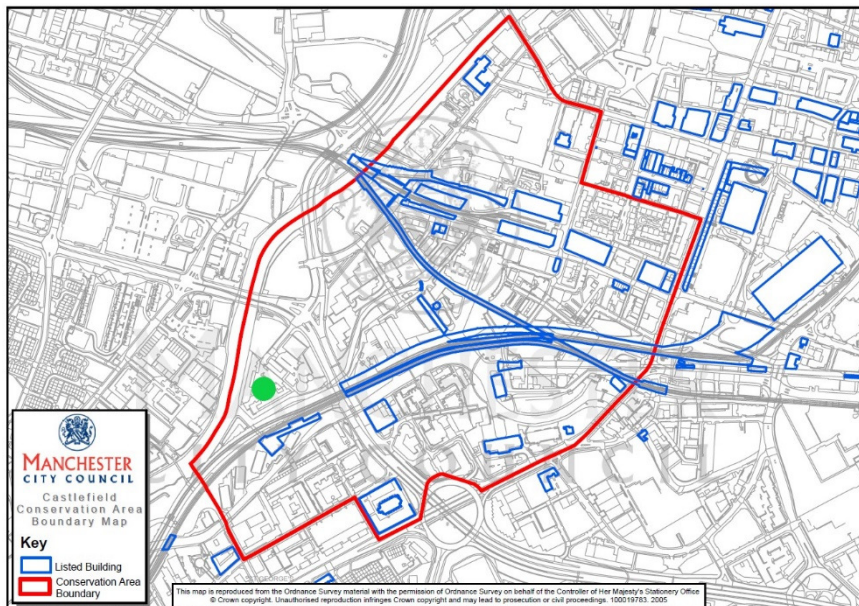
Heritage Statement

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to consider the potential heritage impacts of the proposed refurbishment works. It provides a proportionate analysis of the heritage significance of the VIE Building, considering the direct impact of works on the building and the impact of these works on the setting of the building and its contribution to the Castlefield Conservation Area.

The site lies within the Castlefield Conservation Area which covers a substantial area in the west of the city centre, as shown on the map below. This area is of considerable historic importance, being the birthplace of the city of Manchester in Roman times and the birthplace of the industrial revolution in the eighteenth century when it became a manufacturing centre and focus of transport facilities. In 1982 the area was designated the country's first Urban Heritage Park.

The Castlefield Conservation Area appraisal states:

'Although the variety of building materials used in Castlefield is very wide, it tends to be more rugged and industrial in character than in other parts of the city centre. Stone, brick and slate are used extensively, but the most impressive building components are the massive cast-iron columns supporting the railway viaducts and, of course, the viaducts themselves, which are constructed of iron lattice beams. When the quays and canal branches were used for loading, unloading and transporting goods, they needed to be durable and resistant to the heavy pounding of horses' hooves and the iron rims of wagon wheels...'



The area within which VIE Building is situated is separated from the more historic parts of the Conservation Area by the viaduct and the inner ring road. The immediate context includes many other modern commercial and residential buildings which are not typical of the Conservation Area in terms of their age and design.

Completed in 2011, VIE Building is deliberately contemporary. It is designed to reflect its industrial setting, not only within the Conservation Area, but also as a major riverside landmark building.

At the time of the application the appearance of the building was supported by English Heritage and CABE; the latter stating in their letter that the proposed development will 'be a welcome addition to this area'.



The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that great weight is given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Conservation is defined by the NPPF as the process of maintaining and managing change to heritage assets in ways that sustain, and where appropriate, enhance their significance. Paragraph 131 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, as well as the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The refurbishment of VIE Building presents an opportunity to positively enhance the character and appearance of the Castlefield Conservation Area.

The proposed 'like for like' replacement render system and zinc cladding together with the new balcony decking and louvres will present a 'brand new' aesthetic. As well as offering a more attractive place for the current (and future) residents to live, it will also have wider public benefits including securing the long-term retention of the building in active residential and commercial use. In making the area a more desirable place to live, future development and refurbishment will also be encouraged.

The improvements in the area will generate footfall and economic activity within the Castlefield Conservation Area which is beneficial for the local economy and the area generally.



Top left to right: Irwell Block 'Elevation 03', Medlock Block 'Elevation 07' and Irwell Block 'Elevation 01'

The proposed 'material changes' are minimal and sympathetic to the original high-quality design. The replacement decking and louvres will be the same size and have a similar profile to the existing decking and louvres, but will be compliant with current legislation.

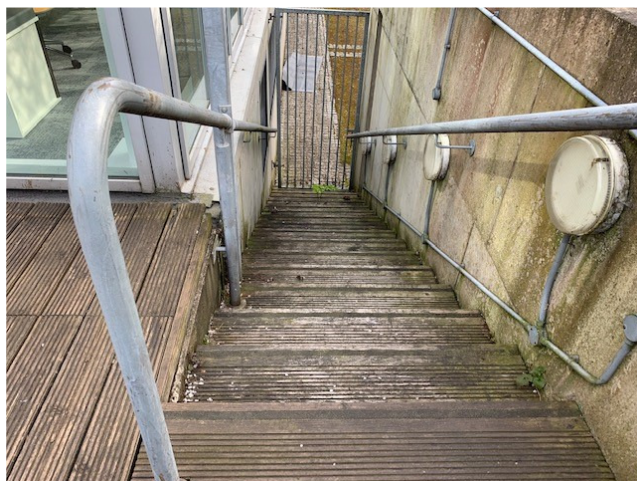
The proposed PPC aluminium systems will also be more robust and durable than the existing louvres and decking which have not aged well having deteriorated in the last 10 years. (See images below.)

The use of metal will also harmonize with the industrial character of the Conservation Area described above.

In summary the remedial works will contribute to the long-term viability of the building and to the character and the authenticity of the conservation area.



Existing timber louvres



Existing timber decking

In view of the above, the proposed refurbishment works are considered to have an entirely positive impact on the building itself and the appreciation of the conservation area.

It is considered that the proposed scheme accords with relevant provisions of national and local planning policy.

The design team look forward to working further with the Council in progressing the proposals through to determination.