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Our ref ASI St Ann's House

12th July 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Unit 2 St Ann's House, St Ann's Place, Manchester
Full Planning Permission for Sub-Division of Unit 2 and Creation of New Shop Front

We have been instructed by the building owner, Standard Life Assurance Limited (SLAL), to submit an application for Planning Permission for the sub-division of Unit 2, St Ann's House, Manchester ('the Site') to form two new Units 2a and 2b and the creation of a new shopfront to St Ann's Place.

An application has been submitted today via the Planning Portal (PP-10003650), which comprises the following supporting information:

- Application form and certificates;
- This Cover Letter;
- Location Plan ref 458-001A;
- Existing and Proposed Site Plan ref 458-002A;
- Existing and Proposed Layout Plan ref 458-003;
- Existing and Proposed Elevations ref: 458-004; and
- Existing and Proposed Shopfront Detail ref: 458-005.

The application fee of £234, based on a site area of 273sq.m has been paid to Manchester City Council today via the Planning Portal.

Application Site

The application site relates to Unit 2 of St Ann's House, a ground floor retail unit located within the primary shopping area of Manchester City Centre. The site is bounded by St Ann Street to the north, St Ann's Place to the east, properties on Police Street to the west and properties on King Street to the south.

The surrounding area comprises of predominately retail uses with St Ann's Square to the north east and King Street to the south of the site, also in addition to a number of prominent historic buildings within the surrounding area including St Ann's Church directly to the east of the site and the Royal Exchange Building to the north east.

The site also lies within the St Ann's Square Conservation Area, the square was originally developed in the Georgian period, however, St Ann's Church is the only surviving building in the surrounding area from that era. The current buildings in the square replaced the original structures over a long period of time, and as such were constructed in various styles, which creates a rich diversity of built form throughout the square. While the square does have a high degree of built form variety each of the replacement buildings has been designed with respect for the existing surrounding buildings.

Planning History

A review of Manchester City Council's online planning register returned a significant number of results. The available planning history which is considered to be most relevant to this proposal is summarised below.

Reference No.	Description	Decision	Date
045449/FO/CITY1/94	3 St Ann's House, installation of a new shop front	Approved	Jun 94
053652/FO/CITY/98	Unit 3, Installation of a new shop front	Approved	Feb 98
022760	3 St Ann's Place, Formation of new entrance to existing shop front	Approved	Oct 84
047188/FO/CITY1/95	Elevational alterations including new windows, new entrance and canopy treatment, external lighting scheme and provision of new lift motor room on roof	Approved	Apr 95
104280/FO/2013/C1	Installation of a new shop front	Approved	Feb 14
094595/FO/2010/C1	New full glazed front and entrance doors to replace existing worn entrance doors. New strip light to be fitted to underside of canopy.	Approved	Feb 11
087007/FO/2008/C1	2 to 3 St Ann's Place, New shop front and revised entrance arrangement	Approved	Aug 08

The planning history information within the table shows that similar applications to the proposal which also involved the development of a new shop front and/or new entrance within St Ann's House were approved.

Applications 087007/FO/2008/C1 and 104280/FO/2013/C1 are particularly relevant to the proposal as they relate to ground floor plots on the northern portion of St Ann's House. Application 087007/FO/2008/C1 refers to the Russell and Bromley retail unit which is the plot that the application is in relation to, application 104280/FO/2013/C1 is also highly relevant as again it relates to a similar development to the application and in addition it is in relation to a neighbouring unit which is adjacent to the proposed site.

Proposed Development

The applicant proposes to sub-divide the existing Unit 2 of St Ann's House to create two new Units, 2a and 2b. This will involve the formation of a new internal wall within the existing Unit 2 as well as the creation of a new shopfront onto St Ann Street to provide access to the new unit.

The proposed development will allow Russell and Bromley to remain within a prominent retail location in the centre of Manchester while trading from a smaller unit. The creation of a new shop front and sub-division of the unit will allow the landlord to market the site to appropriate prospective retail tenants, supporting the viability and vitality of Manchester City Centre.

Planning Policy

The development plan for Manchester consists of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted July 2012) and the retained policies of the Unitary Development Plan (Adopted July 1995) ("the UDP"). The development Plan is supported by a policy map which sets out the extent of spatial policies in Manchester. The policy map shows that the site falls within the St Ann's Square Conservation Area, the City Centre, the City Centre Primary Shopping Area and the Regional Centre as set out in the Core Strategy.

Manchester Core Strategy

Core Strategy Policy CC 1 Primary Economic Development Focus: City Centre and Fringe seeks to encourage a range of economic development uses, such as retail, within the City Centre to *'support the development of a vibrant employment location attractive to businesses, employees and visitors to the City Centre'*. Policy CC 2 Retail states that the council will *'promote the growth and improvement of retail provision in the city centre'* and that *'across the City Centre, retail will be supported where it would ... contribute to the area's character'*.

Policy CC 9 focusses on the design of new buildings and the impact on their surroundings and states that *'development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets identified, including conservation areas'*. Policy EN 3 Heritage gives further details on heritage issues by stating that *'the council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including in the City Centre'*.

Manchester Unitary Development Plan

UDP Policy DC 14 outlines the council's approach to ensuring that the design of shop fronts and associated signs respect the characteristics of the building and the general area. DC 14.1 states that the council will *'seek to ensure that proposals are in keeping with the character of the building and adjoining buildings, of adjoining shopfronts, where appropriate, and of the area within which the premises are located'*.

Policy DC 18 relates to development within conservation areas and states *'The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering the following issues:*

- i) the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces;*
- ii) the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings ...'*

St Ann's Square Conservation Area

The application site lies within the St Ann's Conservation Area of as set out in the UDP. The Council set out their approach to the control of development as follows:

"St. Ann's Square is in the commercial heart of the City, where almost every building accommodates shops on the ground floor. Encouragement of this variety will help maintain the character of the area. Where buildings need to be replaced, historic copies are not encouraged; instead high quality modern design, taking cues from the remaining historic buildings is promoted. Building proposals should be designed to enhance the existing quality of the built environment".

Planning Assessment

Unit 2 St Ann's House lies in a prominent retail location in the centre of Manchester extending to 253sq.m. The unit has been occupied by Russell and Bromley for a substantial period. Following changing retail patterns, particularly the move to online retailing, the occupier no longer requires a unit of this scale however the operator wishes to remain in this location. The landlord, Standard Life, has considered a number of options to facilitate this and has determined that the best use of the site while retaining the tenant in this location is to sub-divide Unit 2 to form Unit 2b to be retained by Russell and Bromley and to create a new smaller Unit 2a to be marketed to prospective tenants. In order to facilitate this, a new shopfront will be required to provide access to the new unit. A degree of market testing has confirmed strong interest in unit of this size in this location.

The applicant proposes a new shopfront to match Unit 1 to the west and Unit 2 to the east to ensure uniformity and to maintain the high quality design present in this area of the city centre. The proposed design to match adjacent units will continue to support the high quality of design and built form within the St Ann's Square Conservation Area.

Retaining a 'prestige' brand such as Russell and Bromley within the city centre will contribute towards the vitality and viability of the city centre, drawing footfall into the surrounding area and encouraging customers to spend within the city centre. The provision of a new smaller unit will also offer the opportunity for a new operator to take space within a high profile area within the city.

The proposed development is limited in scope and nature and will support an existing retail operation in the city centre while providing an opportunity to attract a new retailer. The proposed development will support the city centre's role as a regionally important centre for retail and economic activity. The design and materials proposed are in keeping with the existing and adjacent units and will contribute positively to the surrounding area while respecting the heritage setting in which the unit lies. As such the proposed development is considered to constitute sustainable development.

Conclusion

The applicant, Standard Life Assurance Limited (SLAL), proposes the sub-division of Unit 2, St Ann's House to accommodate the changing needs of an existing occupier, Russell and Bromley, while offering a new unit to prospective occupiers. The development is limited in scale and will contribute positively to both the functioning of the city centre and to the heritage setting of the St Ann's Conservation Area. The proposed development is considered to constitute sustainable development and should therefore be approved.

I trust that the information submitted is sufficient to determine this application however please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tom Robinson'.

Tom Robinson

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