

Heritage Statement

in connection with

**Proposed Conversion of 59-61 George Leigh Street, Victoria
Square, Manchester**

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1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Methodology

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been prepared to assess how proposals to convert a vacant corner shop unit, part of the grade II listed of the Victoria Square building, might impact upon the heritage significances of the grade II listed building. The unit, which was previously a cobblers and will be converted into a bar-restaurant, lies at the corner of George Leigh St and Sherratt St, Victoria Square, Manchester.
- 1.2 The approach taken in the preparation of this statement adheres to the principle of *managing change intelligently*, which lies at the heart of national planning policy for conservation of the historic built environment. The methodology employed involves the following sequential steps
 - Establish the nature of the proposed change(s), including the overall aim of the change and any emergent design proposals
 - Identify any designated and/or non-designated heritage assets potentially affected by proposals for change
 - Evaluate the heritage values and significances of the heritage assets, placing particular focus on values and significances that might be affected by the proposed change(s)
 - Produce a statement of significance which is to be used to guide the design of changes in a manner that places conservation of significance as a priority
 - Analyse the potential impact of the finalised design upon the significance(s) of the heritage asset(s)
- 1.3 The statement has been prepared in accordance with the general guidelines set out in the Historic England publications 'Informed Conservation' and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' and responds to heritage policies outlined in Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2019). Historic England guidance in preparing heritage statements, entitled 'Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets' (Historic England Advice Note 12, 2019) has also been used. The legal context is set by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. Further guidance has been obtained from the following Historic England publications:
 - GPA2 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015)
 - GPA3 - Setting and Views
 - Historic England Advice Notes (HEAN) 1-12

The Authors

- 1.4 Chris O'Flaherty, the author, is a Chartered Building Surveyor and professional member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (MRICS) With a background in the recording, analysis and conservation of historic buildings, the author holds a Master's Degree in Building Heritage and Conservation and specialises in heritage planning matters.
- 1.5 Eleanor Scott XXX

Methods of Research and Investigation

- 1.6 Inspections of the site were carried out in June and November 2020 to assess its physical nature. Background research has also been conducted to ascertain all relevant contextual matters appertaining to the proposals. In accordance with the NPPF, background research has been proportionate to the nature of the building/site, the proposed change(s) and the likely impact of the change(s).
- 1.7 In terms the site's potential for buried archaeology, this has not been explored beyond scrutiny of historic mapping.

2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Location

- 2.1 The unit lies at the corner of George Leigh Street and Sherratt Street and is part of the Victoria Square tenement block situated in the Ancoats district of Manchester. Victoria Square is bounded by Oldham Road to the north, Bengal Street to the east, George Leigh Street to the south and Sherratt Street to the west. A location plan is given in figure 1.



Figure 1) Site location

Outline Description & Historical Background

- 2.2 Victoria Square dates from the late C19th. It comprises an entire block laid out in a quadrangle form with five floors of apartments surrounding a central courtyard. In addition to the residential apartments, there are some commercial units at ground floor level and along the Oldham Road façade. The vacant unit considered in this heritage statement, unused for at least 15 years, is one of the former (and original) commercial units, having previously been a cobblers.
- 2.3 Victoria Square was built as a reaction to the declining living standards of working class people through the C19th. By the end of the preceding century Manchester became established as a regional centre for the manufacture and trade of cotton goods, and this fuelled rapid industrial growth as people flocked to work in the city, with the Ancoats' cotton-spinning mills becoming a major employer. The surge in population resulted in overcrowded, unsanitary back-to-back housing, and the spreading of diseases such as Typhoid and

Cholera led in 1885 to the Manchester Corporation appointed 'The Unhealthy Dwellings Committee' whose job it was to review the living conditions of the working classes. This review resulted in many parts of Ancoats being declared as 'Unhealthy Areas', and the site of Victoria Square was cleared of slums to make way for a revolutionary new multi-storey municipal tenement block, the first in Manchester.

- 2.4 Victoria Square was completed in 1894 and has remained inhabited since, having undergone various schemes of alteration repair and refurbishment. Further details of the building are given in the listed description below.



Figure 2) 1893 OS map showing housing cleared to make way for Victoria Square

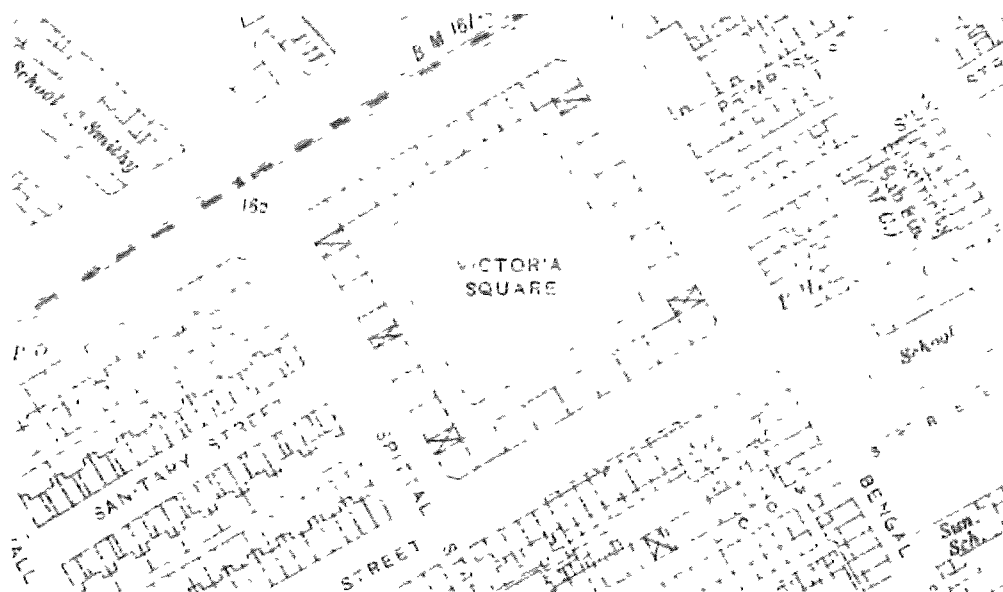


Figure 3) 1915 OS map showing Victoria Square



Figure 4) Oldham Road façade of Victoria Square showing shop awnings



Figure 5) The vacant corner unit

Heritage Asset Designations

2.5 Victoria Square is a designated heritage asset under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In 1988, the building was Grade II listed so it is considered of 'special architectural or historic interest'. The building stands within the Ancoats Conservation Area, designated in 1989 by Manchester City Council.

2.6 The listing description for Victoria Square is given below.

2.7 SJ8498 OLDHAM ROAD, Ancoats 698-1/17/459 (South side) 20/06/88 Victoria Square (Formerly Listed as: OLDHAM ROAD, Ancoats (South side) Victoria Buildings)

GV II

Tenement block. 1889, by Henry Spalding and A.W.Cross, for Manchester Corporation; altered. Red brick with terracotta dressings, slate roofs. Square courtyard plan with balcony access inside courtyard. The Oldham Road facade is 5 storeys (plus attics to the centre and ends), 18 main bays, symmetrical (with windows grouped 3 1:1:1·1.1:2:1.1:1:1:3), a shaped gable over the 2-bay centre, larger shaped gables and pavilion roofs with apex lanterns and finials over the ends, and small pedimented gables with ball finials over the intermediated bays; and a cornice over the ground floor and double string-courses between the upper floors giving a strong horizontal emphasis. The 2-bay centre has coupled segmental-headed arches at ground floor, canted oriels tiered from 1st to 4th floor with terracotta mullion-and-transom windows, and 3 oculi in the gable. Otherwise, the ground floor has altered shop fronts, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors of the intermediate bays have pairs of segmental-headed sashed windows and the 4th floor has tripartite sashes under semicircular blank arches, and between these windows each floor has a blank arch containing 2 very small windows; and the 3-bay ends have single windows to all floors including the attic gables, which have tall round-headed windows in the centre. Splayed corners with doorways at ground floor and oriels to the upper floors like those of the centre. The long east and west return sides each have pairs of semi-circular arched staircase openings at both ends of each upper floor, tripartite windows to the ground and 4th floors, paired windows to the other floors and pairs of oculi between all these windows; and the west side has a central entrance archway to the courtyard. Ridge chimneys. Rear similar. Courtyard surrounded by balconies with prominent curving supports to the railings. History: first municipal housing in Manchester.

3 HERITAGE APPRAISAL

Introduction

- 3.1 The following appraisal adheres to guidance published by Historic England (2008 and 2019)^{iii,iv} and relates specifically to the requirement contained in paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), given in extract below:
- 3.2 "In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary."
- 3.3 The appraisal begins by identifying and assessing any heritage values/interests that might be affected by the proposals, before evaluating these and composing a 'Statement of Significance'. The essential purpose of the Statement is to set priorities for conservation of significance and enable an objective assessment on the likely impact of the proposals.

Heritage Interests

- 3.4 The heritage interests explored below are distilled under the following headings: archaeological interest; historic interest; architectural and artistic interest. The exploration focusses specifically on those interests deemed of possible relevance to the proposals site, and it is not an exhaustive assessment of the inherent heritage interests of the relevant heritage assets. The phrase 'heritage interests' is interchangeable with the phrase 'heritage values', which was used in Historic England guidance from 2008.

Archaeological Interest

- 3.5 Historic England (2019) suggests that "There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point."
- 3.6 No archaeological potential beyond evidence of the past use of the building relates to this case, therefore archaeology is not deemed a relevant factor. That's said, a building record of the building prior change might be requested to retain evidence of the current layout, albeit this will not change to any great degree.

Historical Interest

- 3.7 Historic England (2019) suggests this to be - "An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with

historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity".

3.8 Victoria Square is significant as it was the first municipal housing to be constructed in Manchester. Despite incremental change to its internal and external appearance to meet the needs of its inhabitants, the building's overall form has remained largely unchanged and therefore has illustrative value.

3.9 The building continues to fulfil its original brief as municipal housing, now for around 170 elderly tenants, which strengthens this value. Some of the ground floor shop units remain in use although many, like the unit this heritage statement concerns, are vacant which detracts from the building's illustrative value.

3.10 In a wider sense the building is a significant contributor to the historic interests of the Ancoats Conservation Area, and the unit plays a minor role in this regard.

Architectural and Artistic Interest

3.11 Historic England (2019) suggests that: *"These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture"*

3.12 Victoria Square has distinctive red brick elevations with terracotta and stone dressings characteristic of Manchester's 19th century building stock. The building has imposing scale and massing, taking up the entire block, with well-ordered symmetrical elevations composed with a regular pattern of bays and fenestration. The building was constructed to serve a utilitarian function as tenement housing, however it is clear that the architects Henry Spalding and A W Cross went above and beyond the requirements of this and worked decorative features into the building's form that are noteworthy. The front elevation alongside Oldham Road has a middle Dutch gable and Queen Anne detailing of terracotta, oriel windows and gables adorn all elevations. Herein the building possesses very notable architectural value, a value that is further enhanced by the innovative nature of the plan form and layout of the tenement units and the use of modern construction technologies.

3.13 Whereas the overall architectural value of the building is high, the subject unit plays only a limited role in the composition of the whole. That said, as a corner unit it does possess a degree of landmark quality in its own right with architectural embellishments to the exterior. By contrast the interior lacks such embellishment and herein architectural interest is

comparatively low.

Statement of Significance

- 3 14 Having assessed the heritage values associated with the site, it is now possible to take a more informed approach to the assessment of site significance. This will consider prioritising conservation in light of the proposals for change. In this context, a statement of significance is given below.
- 3 15 Victoria is a grade II listed building and Manchester's first municipal housing block dating from the late C19th, which lies within the Ancoats Conservation Area. The building is therefore a designated heritage asset situated within a designated heritage asset, therefore special protective planning laws relate to its current and future management/development.
- 3 16 In terms of heritage interests, the principle findings of this appraisal are that Victoria Square has high illustrative historical interest as Manchester's first flagship municipal housing scheme with most of its unique historical significance residing in the tenement flats above street level. In addition, owing to its plan layout, scale, massing and architectural treatment, the building also holds high architectural interest, which, in a similar vein to the historic interest, makes notable contribution to the special architectural and historic interests of the Ancoats Conservation Area.
- 3.17 The corner unit considered specifically within this heritage statement, which is in poor condition having lain vacant for many years, formed an integral part of the architects Spalding and Cross' original building scheme as one of 16 shops, each with a cellar. The shops would have provided much needed amenities for the industrial workers in Ancoats and therefore the unit retains some historic value owing to its history of commercial use. The unit, although plain and unadorned to the interior, has decorative features to the exterior (many in need of repair), having a splayed symmetrical shop frontage attractively decorated with terracotta tiles and classical Doric pilasters, which contribute to the wider architectural interests of the whole building.
- 3 18 In terms of priorities for conservation, any proposed changes to the unit must first obtain listed building consent, and for this to be forthcoming it is of primary importance to conserve the exterior appearance and materiality of the building, including sympathetic like for like repairs where necessary. Otherwise, whereas the interior holds little by way of specific architectural interest, it would be preferable to see a minimum intervention approach and ensure that any introduction of new materials (fixtures and fittings etc) in a readily reversible manner. That said, securing a new and viable use for the unit is without doubt the most urgent priority, in order to sustain heritage significance for now and the future.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSALS

General Principles

- 4.1 General guidance on assessing proposed changes to heritage assets is given in chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019). The NPPF establishes the premise that conserving significance should be a guiding principle when designing proposals for any development. In order to do this, it is first necessary to understand the heritage significance(s) of heritage assets before commencing with design.
- 4.2 Part 3 of this statement fulfils the need to understand significance and the findings of part 3 have informed the design of the proposals. There follows, here in section 4, an objective review of the finalised scheme, verifying to what extent conservation of significance has been achieved or whether any harm is likely to accrue.

Summary of the Proposals

- 4.3 The proposals involve internal renovation to the ground floor and basement level of the corner unit to bring it back into use as a restaurant and bar. What are likely to be original features, such as the timber window frames, fireplace and wrought iron ballustrade, are being retained. The ground floor will remain largely unchanged, except for new furniture and some fittings, whereas the basement will be fitted out as a kitchen.
- 4.4 Externally, the proposal includes conservative repair to the shop front's terracotta faience mouldings, particularly those that are incomplete and cracked. This work is to be carried out by a specialist contractor and will use lime mortar to replace missing material. The intention is to restore the façade, thereby furthering the appreciation of the historic and aesthetic values of the corner unit and strengthening its visual connection to Victoria Square as a whole.
- 4.5 Also externally, the proposals include the addition of awning to the shop windows to provide a covered seating area at the front of the unit. Positively, the awnings will not conceal the most impressive of the terracotta mouldings such as the Doric column detailing flanking the corner unit's entrance. From an analysis of archival photographs, there is a historical precedent for the use of awnings on Victoria Square's shop fronts as shown earlier in figure 4. In addition, other landmark late 19th century buildings in Manchester, such as the Corn Exchange, have been fitted with retractable awnings in order to successfully fulfil their new functions as restaurant bars and expand capacity.
- 4.6 A full set of drawings accompanies the listed building consent application for the scheme, and these are not reproduced within this report. The major physical changes the drawings depict are the awnings to the exterior, the material repairs to the exterior, the fitting out of the bar and the kitchen.

Analysis of the Proposals: National Planning Policy Framework

4.7 As discussed earlier, section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF (2019) considers heritage planning and identifies the following key drivers in the decision making process

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

4.8 The NPPF unifies the overall approach to planning, in order to ensure that deliberations over decisions relating to heritage assets are made in the full planning context. Securing sustainable development is the primary driver of the NPPF: in the heritage context this relies on maintaining active use (long term) in a manner that seeks to limit potential harm to significance

NPPF Paragraph 193

4.9 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

4 10 Parts 2 and 3 of this heritage statement acknowledge the need to explore and understand heritage significances in order to guide proposals for change and review likely impacts, all as outlined within the NPPF. On the matter of whether any harm to significance accrues, this is discussed in the passages below.

NPPF Paragraph 196

4 11 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states:

“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

4.12 The potential risk of less than substantial harm to significance of a designated heritage asset, as referred to in paragraph 196 of the NPPF, could only theoretically arise in this case

should the proposal harm the architectural interests of corner unit

- 4.13 As the proposal will reveal distinctive internal features, conserve the interior plan form, retain/restore the authentic external appearance of the exterior and sensitively repair the exterior, there would appear no reasonable or appreciable case to suggest the proposals would cause any harm to significance. Indeed the converse would appear to be true, given that the proposals seek to place along vacant unit back into a viable use and therefore sustain and enhance the heritage significances of the building for the future, thus conforming with the NPPF's emphasis on finding viable uses for heritage sites consistent with their conservation.

Analysis of the Proposals: Local Heritage Planning Policy

- 4.14 Local planning policy effectively follows, as it must legally do, the policy requirements of the NPPF, therefore separate consideration of local policy in the heritage planning context is not deemed necessary

5 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This heritage statement has been prepared to assess how proposals to convert a vacant corner shop unit, part of the grade II listed of the Victoria Square building, might impact upon the heritage significances of the grade II listed building. The unit, which was previously a cobblers and will be converted into a bar-restaurant, lies at the corner of George Leigh St and Sherratt St, Victoria Square, in the Ancoats Conservation Area, Manchester.
- 5.2 The overall findings of the statement are that the proposals secure a viable new use for a vacant commercial unit, the prior deterioration of which has had a cumulative negative impact on the heritage significance of Victoria Square and Ancoats Conservation Area. The proposals therefore convey a very positive benefit, which is further enhanced by the sensitive manner in which the conversion is to be carried out. The works will involve repair and restoration of the deteriorated facade and minimal interior alteration, indeed just that needed to provide for the new use with the interior, which lacks notable architectural interest, generally being 'left as found'.
- 5.3 In summary the proposals will not result in any harm to the heritage significance of the listed building, but will instead secure notable benefits which are fully supportable under planning law and policy as it relates to the conservation of heritage assets.

ⁱ Clarke, K, *Informed Conservation*, Historic England 2003

ⁱⁱ Historic England, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

ⁱⁱⁱ Historic England, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

^{iv} Historic England Advice Note 12 (2019) *Statements of Heritage Significance Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets*

Proposed Conversion of:

59-61 George Leigh St,
Victoria Square, Manchester M4 5AL

HERITAGE SURVEY

Features of Significance requiring protection, retention and conservation.

Reference: Chapter 16 of NPPF (2019) – Historic England Publications

“Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 & Note 3”

(also known as GPA2, GPA3, 2015)

The legal content is set by the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act of 1990

Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document, adopted 11th July 2012, Policies CC9 & EN3

EXTERIOR

Room/ Item/Artefact	Date	Significance	Protection
Timber window frames & stall risers and entrance door to George Leigh St and Sherratt St	1889 -1894 Fit out 1902	High	Yes
Terracotta faience surrounds to windows to George Leigh St & Sherratt St – ground floor	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	High	Yes

INTERIOR

Room/ Item/Artefact	Date	Significance	Protection
Raised timber bench window display to windows to George Leigh St & Sherratt St	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	Medium	Yes
Herringbone wood-block floor	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	Medium	Yes
Inset stone to floor on Sherratt St elevation	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	Low	Yes
2 x No cast iron fluted columns	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	High	Yes
Stone/concrete steps with wrought iron balustrade & timber handrail, leading to quadrangle ginnel	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	Medium	Yes
Stone/concrete steps with wrought iron balustrading & timber handrail leading to basement	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	Medium	Yes
Timber panelling over steps to basement	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	Low	Yes
Sash window to elevation facing onto ginnel to quadrangle	1889 – 1894 Fit out 1902	Medium	Yes