

GRAEME IVES  
HERITAGE PLANNING

# Heritage Statement

Hexagon Tower, Crumpsall Vale, Blackley, Manchester

Trinity Investment Management

February 2021

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of Trinity Investment Management in respect to an application for full planning permission for external alterations (the ‘proposed development’) at Hexagon Tower, Crumpsall Vale, Blackley, Manchester (the ‘application site’).
- 1.2 The proposed alterations involve re-cladding of the external elevations of the building and replacing the windows. From a heritage perspective Hexagon Tower has been identified as a ‘non-designated heritage asset’ during pre-application consultations with Manchester City Council.
- 1.3 The Church of St. Peter (grade II\*) is located to the east of Hexagon Tower, the application site is considered to be located within the setting of the church and for completeness has been described in this Heritage Statement. Therefore, in determining the proposals Manchester City Council, the local planning authority (LPA), has a ‘statutory duty’ under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it may possess.
- 1.4 National planning policy in respect to the conservation of the historic environment is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2019) (NPPF) and places the following requirements on applicants:

*“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 understanding the potential impact of the proposals 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. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.” (NPPF Paragraph 189)*

- 1.5 Given the above legislative and policy requirements Chapter 2 of this Heritage Statement identifies the relevant heritage assets that could be affected by the proposal. Chapter 3 reviews the historic development of the application site and adjoining area and Chapter 4 describes the significance of the heritage assets, proportionate to the potential impact of the proposed development. Chapter 5 provides an assessment of that potential impact and Chapter 6 makes a series of conclusions with reference to the relevant legislation and policy requirements.

## 2.0 The Relevant Heritage Assets

### Introduction

- 2.1 The NPPF defines a heritage asset as follows:

*“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”*

### Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.2 The NPPF confirms that designated heritage assets comprise, World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, protected wreck sites, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and conservation areas.
- 2.3 The designated heritage assets that are relevant in considering the proposed development are identified below:

#### Listed Buildings:

- 2.4 Listed buildings are designated for their special architectural or historic interest in accordance with the DCMS Principles for Selection of Listed Buildings (2010). The listed building identified in Table 2.1 is relevant with respect to the proposed development:

**Table 2.1: Listed buildings relevant to the application site:**

| Listed Building:   | Grade: |
|--------------------|--------|
| St. Peter’s Church | II*    |

- 2.5 St. Peter’s Church is located approximately 500 metres from the Hexagon Tower. The intervening townscape has been subject to several phases of change since the church was constructed in the mid C19th. The proposals are unlikely to affect its significance, however given the NPPF definition of setting it has been included for completeness.
- 2.6 The Church of St. Matthew and St. Mary (grade II Listed) is located to the south-west of the application site, however the topography of the Irk Valley, the associated street pattern, townscape and tree cover prevent the church from being experienced from the site and it has been discounted for the purposes of this Heritage Statement.

### Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.7 Historic England guidance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice Note 3 (2015) advises that non-designated heritage assets may be identified through the following mechanisms:

*“Non-designated heritage assets include those that have been identified in a Historic Environment Record, in a local plan, through local listing or during the process of considering the application.”*

- 2.8 Manchester City Council has not published a ‘local list’. The Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021 but Hexagon Tower was not identified as a HER asset. However, during pre-application consultations the Council confirmed that Hexagon Tower should be treated as a non-designated heritage asset for the purposes of developing the detailed proposals and determining the planning application.

## 3.0 The Historic Development of the Application Site

### Introduction

- 3.1 The wider context of the application site developed dramatically during the mid to late C19th and then evolved considerably during the C20th. Indeed, the original proposals for Hexagon Tower would have witnessed a far greater degree of change if the whole of the original scheme had been realised. The urban morphology of the Delaunays Road area is therefore summarised below to help gain an understanding of the setting of the heritage assets.

### Historic Map Regression

- 3.2 For much of the C19th Blackley remained as an isolated village to the south-east of Heaton Park. The village comprised a single east-west 'main street', based on the existing Old Market Street, with the large Crumpsall Dye Works extending to the south. St. Peter's Church was recorded on the first Ordnance Survey map to the eastern end of the village.
- 3.3 The village pattern remained clearly discernible by the late C19th, however the Ordnance Survey map of 1893 confirms the development of the vast Prestwich Union Workhouse and Manchester Workhouse to the south-west of Blackley. By that time Harpurhey had also developed as part of the northern expansion of Manchester. The Crumpsall Vale Chemical Works had expanded considerably, and the village incorporated a series of formal

terraced streets, while the application site was occupied by the Blackley Cotton Mill

**Figure 3.1:** Ordnance Survey Map 1893-1909 (1:2,500)



- 3.4 The pattern of development remained largely unchanged on the Ordnance Survey map of 1932. An aerial view dated 1921 illustrates the intensity of industrial development along the River Irk at that time. However, the original Hexagon House, to the bottom left-hand corner of the photograph is not illustrated in the 1932 Ordnance Survey map and it presumed the photograph in Figure 3.2 must post-date 1932.

**Figure 3.2:** The Blackley Works (c.1921)  
([www.colorantshistory.org.uk](http://www.colorantshistory.org.uk))



- 3.5 The 1952-53 Ordnance Survey map confirms the rapid industrial development that had taken place to the east of the River Irk, with a formal grid-pattern of large buildings that included Hexagon House (Chemical Research Laboratories). Old Market Street

remained reasonably well enclosed with a fine-grain townscape at that time and the application site formed part of the older high-density industrial townscape that enclosed the river

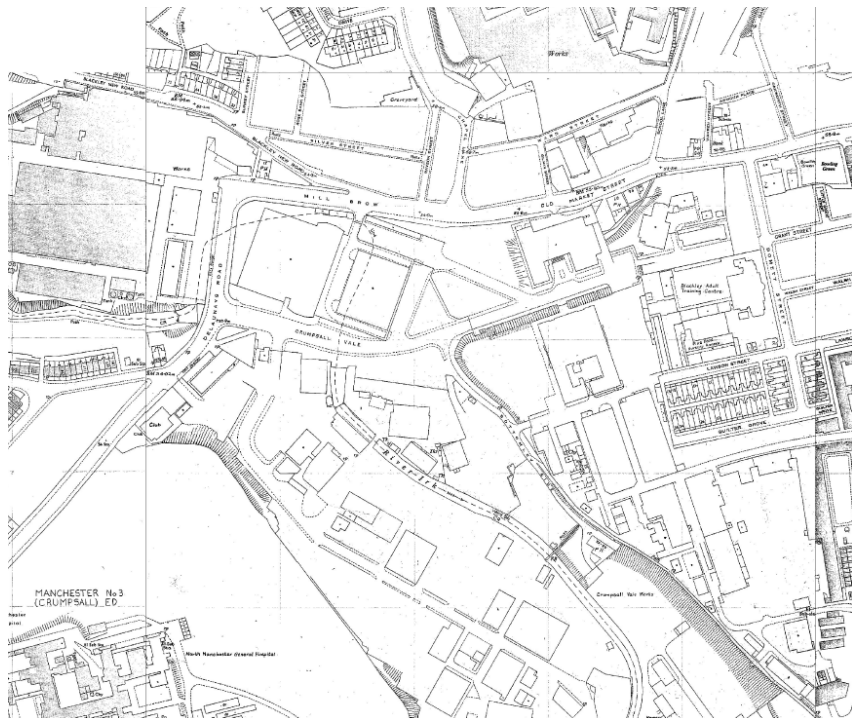
**Figure 3.3:** Ordnance Survey Map 1952-53 (1:2,500)



- 3.6 The 1979-93 Ordnance Survey map illustrates a series of significant changes. Firstly, the application site had been redeveloped with Hexagon Tower (1973) which had required the 'U' bend in the River Irk to be culverted. Interestingly, the decision must have been made to culvert the river rather than change the street pattern, as

Hexagon Tower was constructed at a slight oblique angle between Mill Brow and Crumpsall Vale. The second significant change by that time had been the clearance of almost all of the buildings that had enclosed the Old Market Street, the original 'main street' of Blackley. Thirdly, the high-density industrial area that had developed alongside the River Irk had been significantly reduced to create a more fragmented and open townscape.

**Figure 3.4:** Ordnance Survey Map (1979-83) (1:2,500)



- 3.7 The development of Hexagon Tower appears to have represented only one part of a more ambitious and far-reaching master plan for the area to the south of Old Market Street. Richard Seifert, architect of Hexagon Tower, had illustrated a larger scheme comprising a series of towers and podiums that extended south-east of the existing building. It is understood that the existing tower is on the left of the image, with the others extending to the south-east of the application site.

**Figure 3.5:** Photograph of a painting by Richard Seifert of a more comprehensive masterplan



- 3.8 The Ordnance Survey map of 1986-90 confirms the removal of the original Hexagon House and the extent of clearance within the centre of Blackley. More recently, however, a stronger townscape

with a greater sense of enclosure has been redeveloped, particularly along Old Market Street and the site originally occupied by the former ICI Hexagon Building complex now comprises a residential suburb.

**Figure 3.6:** Ordnance Survey Map (1986-90) (1:10,000)

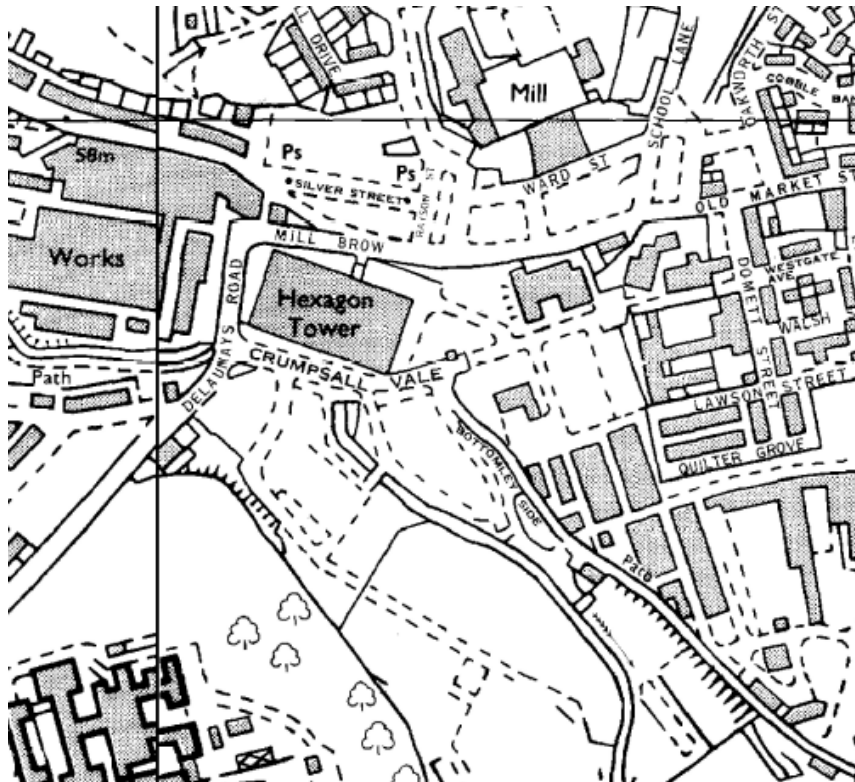


**Figure 3.7:** An aerial photograph of Blackley (Google Earth Pro)



3.9 In summary, the townscape of Blackley has been shaped by several quite dramatic phases of change and Hexagon Tower, which caused the river to be culverted, now remains as a relic from the ICI era that has mostly replaced with a residential neighbourhood.

## 4.0 The Significance of the Heritage Assets

### Introduction

- 4.1 The NPPF defines significance (for heritage policy) as:

*“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.”*

- 4.2 The setting of a heritage asset is defined by the NPPF as follows:

*“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”*

- 4.3 The National Planning Practice Guide (NPPG) further advises, that:

*“The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience*

*an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places.”*

- 4.4 Historic England guidance on The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition, 2017) confirms that:

*“Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.”*

- 4.5 The Historic England Good Practice Advice Note provides a non-exhaustive checklist of potential attributes of setting, concerning the ‘physical surroundings’ and ‘experience of the asset’, that may help to elucidate the contribution of setting to significance and have been used to help inform this Heritage Statement.
- 4.6 The description of the significance of the heritage assets, provided below, is proportionate to their importance and the likely impact of the proposed development on their significance, including their setting.

## Hexagon Tower (Non-Designated Heritage Asset)

### Architectural and Historic Value

#### *Richard Seifert and Partners*

- 4.7 Hexagon Tower was designed by Richard Seifert and Partners towards the end of the Brutalist era of the Modern Movement.
- 4.8 Modernist architecture evolved from the early C20th through the use of new technologies, expression of function and rejection of ornamentation. Initially, the movement flourished in Europe, and particularly Germany, during the 1920s. *“Much of the work of architects such as Gropius in Germany, Le Corbusier in France and J.J.P. Oud in Holland seemed to coincide stylistically and philosophically in the 1920s. This new wave became known as the International Style, after an exhibition of the same name organised by Alfred Barr, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in 1932.”* (Brutalism Post-War British Architecture, Second Edition, Clement 2018).
- 4.9 The 1930s witnessed an influx of architectural emigres, including Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and Berthold Lubetkin, which alongside the influence of Le Corbusier gave a greater impetus to the Modern Movement in Britain. In 1951 the Festival of Britain took place as a means of show-casing British products and stimulating design thinking. This provided an impetus for a second generation of Modernists. *“Post-war Britain was more receptive to modernism, albeit a softer, more Scandinavian version than the pure white boxes of the 1920s and 30s. This more domestic and less*

*threatening second-generation modernism came to be known in the UK as Festival of Britain style .... This Festival style can be seen all over the country, at new towns like Harlow and rebuilding projects like central Coventry, as well as fitted into any other town you can mention. Modernism had found its popular British form, via Scandinavia.”* (Britain’s Heritage Brutalism, Reading 2018).

**Figure 4.1:** Royal Festival Hall (1949-51) (Mathew, Martin and Moro)



- 4.10 ‘New Brutalism’ is thought to originate from the work of architects Alison and Peter Smithson at Hunstanton School (1947), with the term used in an article they wrote in 1953. ‘Neo-Brutalism’ was also used by Swedish architect Hans Asplund in 1950. However, it seems to have been architectural critic Reyner Banham who picked up the mantle with an article intended to define New Brutalism in 1955 and further publications in the 1960s Clement (2018).

*“The leader of the yobs was a charismatic young architectural journalist named Peter Reyner Banham, who gathered around him a group committed to correcting the failings of current British architecture. To indicate that they were taking the fight to the newly established Modernist establishment with its spirit of self-effacing social service, they parodied the tag ‘New Humanism’ by calling their own movement ‘the New Brutalism’. .... The term Brutalism could easily have died with the discussions of the 1950s: many architects had no time for theoretical writing amidst the busy years of the 1960s building boom. It was the 1966 book by Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic*, which secured its continuing life, not as the rallying point for 1950s radicals wanting a change, but as a stylistic term for any large, concretey building from the 1960s and 70s”. (The Beauty of Brutalism, Raw Concrete Calder, 2016)*

**Figure 4.2:** The National Theatre (1969-76) (Sir Denis Lasdun)



- 4.11 The New Brutalist period was short-lived, its heyday continuing until the mid-1970s. However, it was hugely influential in transforming the townscape of many towns and cities and building typologies including commercial offices, universities, school building programmes, hotels, residential developments, ecclesiastical and public buildings.
- 4.12 One of the most influential architects of the movement was Richard Seifert, although his commercial approach, use of materials and style differentiated him from other leading practices at the time.
- 4.13 Seifert was born in Zurich in 1910 and soon after his family emigrated to the UK. He established his practice R. Seifert and Partners in the late 1940s and designed a series of high-profile developments particularly in London, but also in Birmingham and Manchester during the mid to late C20th. The approach of the practice is summarised in Richard Seifert British Brutalist Architect (Bradbury, 2020):

*“The term ‘Seifertian’ – like the word ‘Miesian’ or ‘Corbusian’ – embraced a very specific and distinctive approach to architectural design. Seifert’s mid-century buildings .... Were characterised by a sense of rigour, discipline and professionalism combined with innovative engineering and a sculptural use of concrete in the New Brutalist style. The practice and its consultant engineers pushed at the boundaries of tectonics, particularly when it came to a sequence of skyscrapers and high-rises built between 1966, when Seifert and his partner George March completed Centre Point, and 1980, when the practice finally finished work on the NatWest*

*Tower, which on completion was the tallest building in Britain.”*  
(Bradbury, 2020)

**Figure 4.3:** Centre Point (R. Seifert and Partners, 1966)



- 4.14 Seifert became both admired and notorious for his ability to identify and exploit loopholes in the planning system.

*“There are something like 350 Acts of Parliament governing building operations. I find it difficult to understand how an architect can possibly advise his client to their advantage if he does not know the law’ ... So intelligent and thorough was Seifert’s pursuit of planning loopholes that he became a byword for them; the LCC repeatedly had to change its bylaws to close gaps he had exploited,*

*and planners came to dub the new regulations ‘Seifert clauses’.”*  
(Calder, 2016)

- 4.15 Unsurprisingly, commercial success followed and having started as a small practice in 1948 the practice grew to employ around 200 people by 1966, with several offices in London and further regional bases, including offices in Glasgow and Manchester. Although the Manchester office was described as a ‘failed experiment’ (Bradbury, 2020).

*“... Seifert and Partners became best known, during the 1960s and 1970s, for its work on a new generation of high-rise buildings that fused an innovative approach to structural engineering with expressive, sculptural forms and facades that set these mid-century skyscrapers apart. ...”* (Bradbury, 2020)

- 4.16 Seifert and Partners was renowned for its collaboration with engineers. *“Typically, Seifert’s towers also featured a reinforced concrete core, which carried all of the services and circulation spaces, including the lift shaft and stairwells. .... Beyond this, Richard Seifert, partner George Marsh and Wilem Frischmann developed a construction system using precast concrete units that were layered, one upon the other, floor by floor, to create a structural façade around the perimeter of the building. This was especially useful at Centre Point, where the central site was tightly restricted, and the use of these modular, prefabricated units enabled the building to be built from the inside out, with cranes supported by the concrete core. Just as importantly, the precast units created for Centre Point, Space House and other Seifert and Partners high-rise projects were sculptural as well as functional,*

*helping to enhance – in conjunction with their form – the distinctive personalities of the buildings themselves.” (Bradbury, 2020)*

**Figure 4.4:** Alpha Tower, Birmingham (1972) (Seifert and Partners)

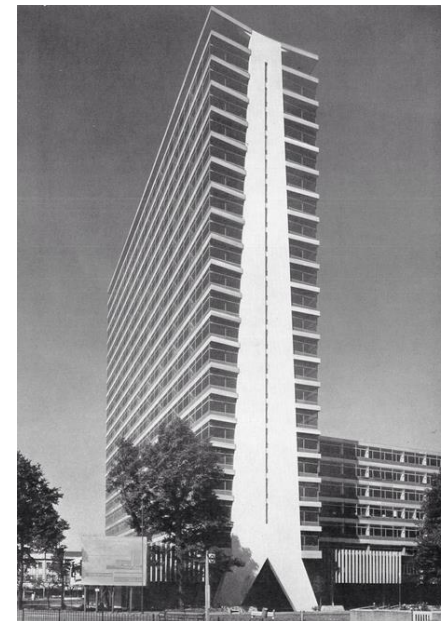


- 4.17 Seifert and Partners towers were often raised above ground level by pilotis to create a dynamic relationship at street level and provide more sheltered spaces on the approach to the main entrance lobby.
- 4.18 Seifert and Partners use of materials departed from the ‘breton brut’ raw concrete of other key Brutalist practitioners. *“The adaption of precast sculptured capstone was repeated in numerous of our buildings until it became apparent that applied mosaic in the precasting would provide a suitable self-cleaning surface to combat staining and pollution.”* (Bradbury, 2020). Schemes, such as Drapers Gardens, London, (1967), the NLA Tower in Croydon (1970) and the Park Tower Hotel, London (1973) all used a grey/white mosaic. However, it was not used to the exclusion of other cladding

materials and at Alpha Tower, Birmingham (1972) and the Wembley Conference Centre (1977) the partnership used a textured pre-cast concrete panel, although the undercroft of Alpha Tower incorporates mosaic panels.

- 4.19 Seifert and Partners designed a range of ‘slab-like’ forms as well as towers that were serviced by a central core. Podium blocks, that acted as a horizontal foil to the principal tower, were also a common feature of their schemes. In Manchester, the practice was also notable for Gateway House (1967-9), with the serpentine façade that encloses the ‘ramp’ approach to Piccadilly Station.

**Figure 4.5:** Tolworth Tower, Kingston Upon Thames (1968)



4.20 Tolworth Tower in Kingston Upon Thames is one such scheme that combines a slab form and podium and is relevant to a consideration of Hexagon Tower in Manchester. The gables of Tolworth Tower featured a tapered panel that projects from splayed ground floor panels to articulate the entrances. However, at Tolworth each floor is emphasised with a strong horizontal line and the full-height glazing gives the impression of the floors 'floating' and cantilevered from the wide gable pier.

4.21 Bradbury's book 'Richard Seifert British Brutalist Architect (Page 37, 2020) includes a painting entitled 'Tolworth Tower (early version)' which is virtually identical to Hexagon Tower. However, the same image is identified elsewhere as being from the ICI archive associated to their Blackley site in Manchester (Figure 4.6).

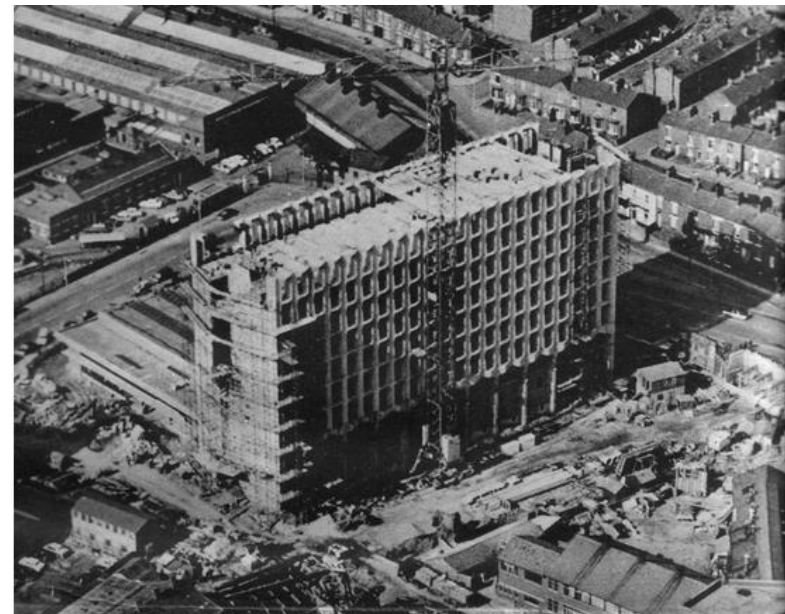
**Figure 4.6:** An image of the ICI Blackley Technical service Centre ([www.nwex.co.uk](http://www.nwex.co.uk))



### **Hexagon Tower**

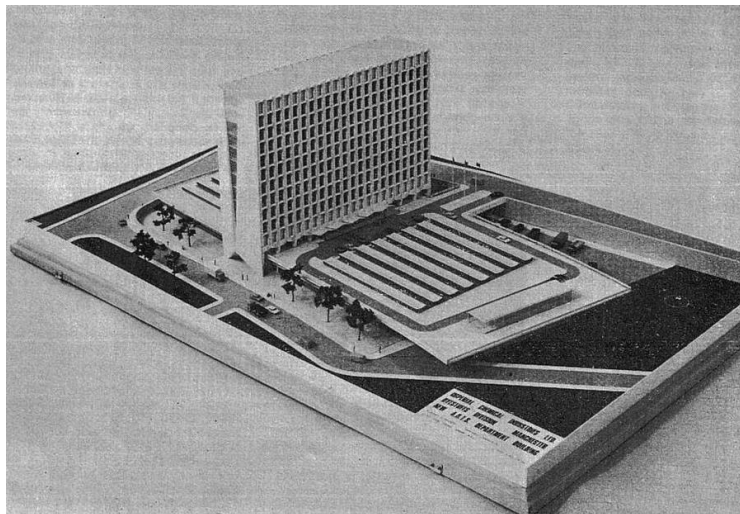
4.22 The form of Hexagon Tower comprises a tall, slab-like, element of eleven storeys, which incorporates a double height ground floor with a mezzanine, that rises above a two-storey podium block to either side. The vertical element is located slightly off centre, towards the western side of the podium block. ICI's original vision for Blackley seems to have envisaged Hexagon Tower as one of four similar slab-like blocks that were to be connected by a continuous podium form. The aesthetic of the tower element owes much to the method of construction and the use of prefabricated components that were 'stacked' as each floor was added.

**Figure 4.7:** A photograph of Hexagon Tower during construction



- 4.23 The approach to the building includes two principal entrances. The northern entrance is approach via a vehicular ramp from Mill Brow, which is now enclosed by a high railing but originally provided the access for senior executives of the company who were able to arrive by car and enter directly into the upper level of the mezzanine. The staff entrance is formed in the southern gable and provides a direct access from Crumpsall Vale. The entrance is protected by an undercroft formed by the splayed frame of the gable structure. The senior executive's entrance was originally protected by a projecting canopy, however that feature has been removed.

**Figure 4.8:** A model of Hexagon Tower illustrating the ramped drive of the Senior Executive's entrance and the associated canopy



- 4.24 The longitudinal elevations of the tower element comprise 22 bays over 10 floors, while the ground floor and mezzanine feature an arcade of pilotis that are two bays in width. Each bay incorporates a full height, narrow hexagonal window opening that is quite deeply recessed into the reveal. The hexagonal shaped windows represent the chemical compound Benzene which was associated with the synthetic dyes manufactured by the company.

**Figure 4.9:** The south-eastern elevation

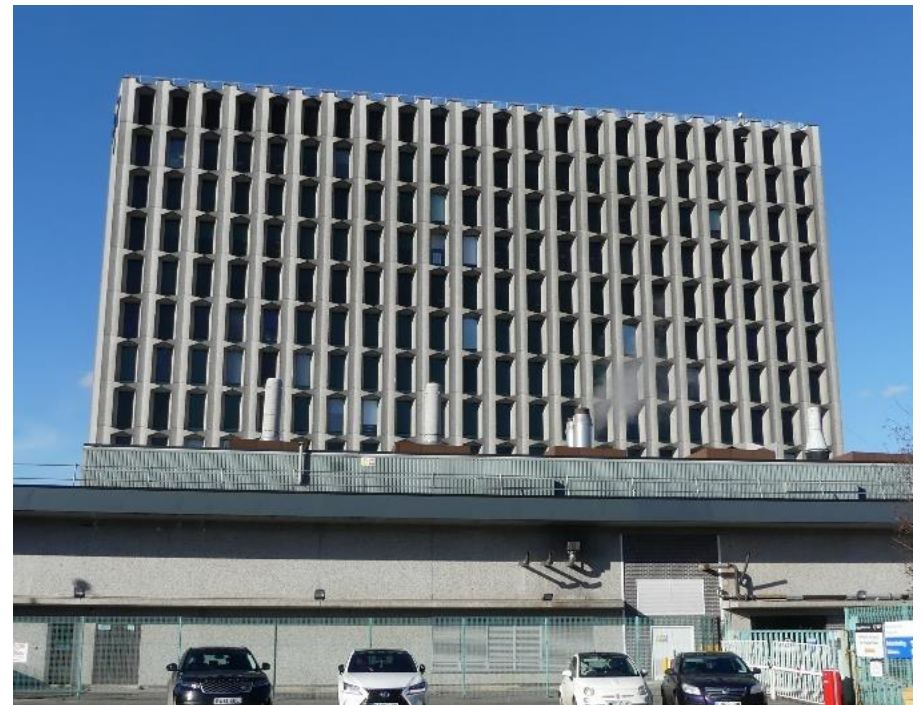


**Figure 4.10:** A detail of sculptural panels to the principal elevations



- 4.25 The two gables of the tower rise to create a tall 'V' shaped opening that lights the principal staircases. The flights of the staircases are legible from ground level. The solidity of the gables, which is accentuated by the monumental, splayed legs, provides a foil for the rhythm of the openings to the principal elevations. The solid full-height panels are slightly canted, which increases the protection afforded by the undercroft.

**Figure 4.11:** The south-western gabled elevation of Hexagon Tower

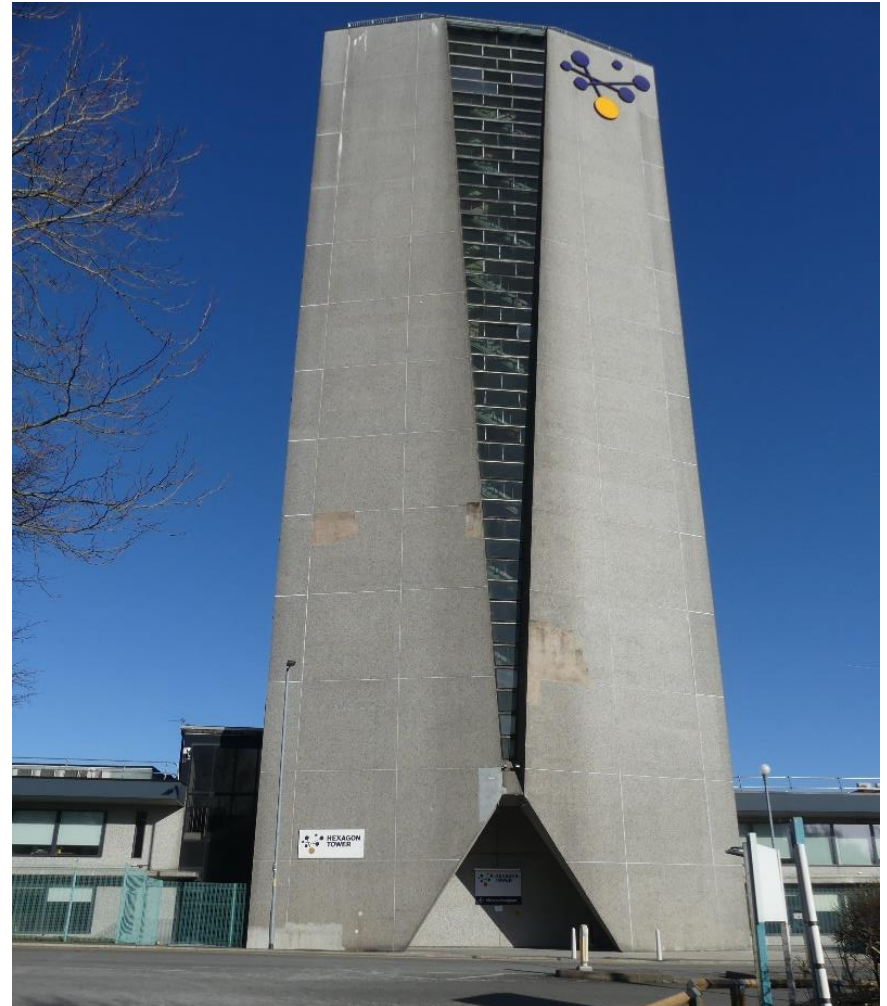
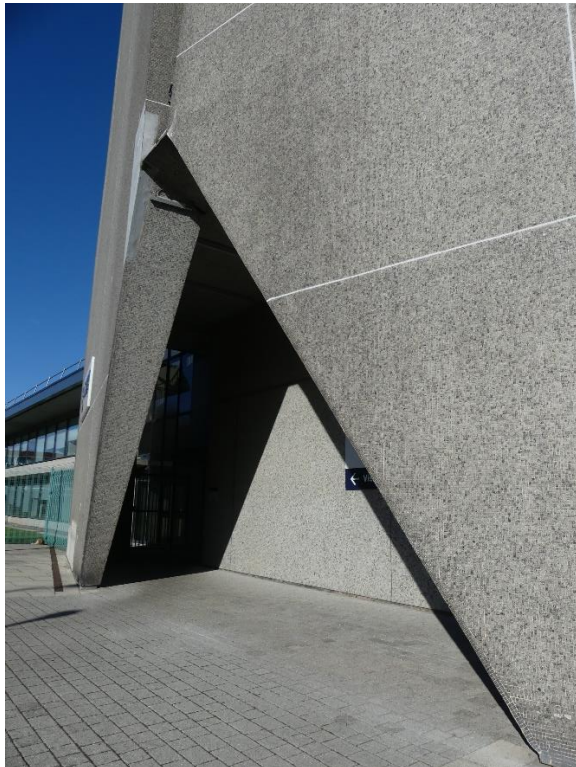


**Figure 4.12:** A detail of the undercroft to the entrance lobby



- 4.26 A further entrance foyer adjoins the north-western side of the principal lobby to Crumpsall Vale. It seems to form a secondary service entrance and was originally open but has been enclosed by a glazed screen. The enclosure projects above the roofline of the adjoining podium block and breaks the illusion of the two podium blocks gliding underneath the tower. The interior of the, now, enclosed lobby is clad in mosaic tiles that match the external elevations.

**Figure 4.13:** The exterior and mosaic clad interior of the secondary lobby



- 4.27 The first floor and parapet of the podium block are expressed to emphasise its horizontal form and contrast with the tower. The first floor and deep reveal to the eaves are clad in mosaic tiles, the elevations of the podium also feature a deeply projecting floor band that wraps the building to provide a canopy above the ground floor windows.
- 4.28 The secondary staircase and lobby (Figure 4.12) are obscured in views from the south-east by the tower and allow the line of the parapet to slide under the visually massive gable piers. The parapet has been clad in a metal cladding system.

**Figure 4.14:** The view of the podium block from the south-east



**Figure 4.15:** The deep reveal to the eaves and first floor canopy



- 4.29 Internally, the ground floor plan illustrates the subtle way in which the southern gable of the tower stands-off the main body of the floor to create the undercroft access to the main entrance. However, the interior of the foyer has been renewed, most recently to complement the use of an upper floor by the NHS.

**Figure 4.16:** The ground floor plan of the tower (foyer to left)

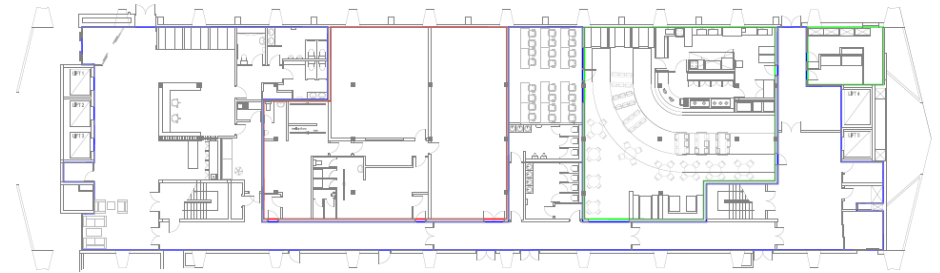


**Figure 4.17:** the existing refurbished ground floor foyer



- 4.30 Floor 1 provides a range of secure storage spaces, accessed from a single long corridor to the south-eastern elevation that corresponds to the long service corridor to the ground floor. Floor 2 originally provided the entrance for senior executives, who entered a double height space, overlooked by a mezzanine floor.

**Figure 4.18:** The existing floor plan for Floor 2, including a series of later partitioned spaces

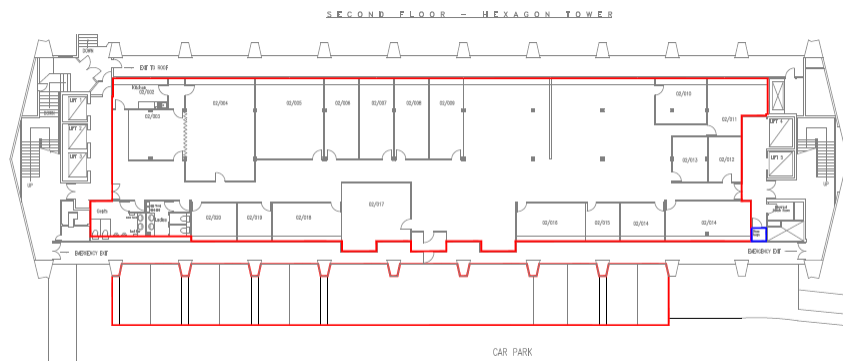


**Figure 4.19:** The existing floor plan for Floor 3

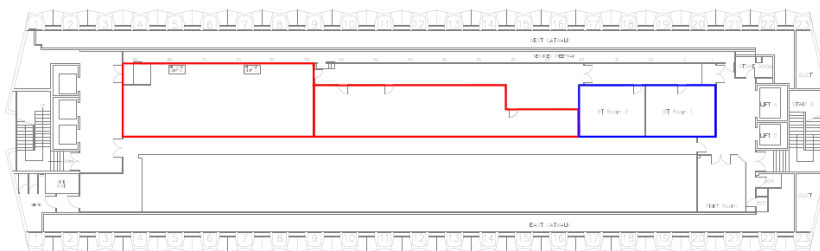


**Figure 4.20:** A photograph of the original mezzanine space



- 4.31 A false ceiling has been erected above the double height space, however the balcony and ceiling to the mezzanine level have been retained. Part of the original mezzanine remains accessible as a long open passageway, however the remainder of the space has been subdivided and enclosed. The northern end of the mezzanine incorporates an IT server room that retains the original exchange. The original panelled ceiling above the former double height space continues over the server room. It is also evident in the northern lift hallway, although the mezzanine space is enclosed with a partition.
- 4.32 The northern lift lobby to Floor 3 retains some originally timber panelling, while the southern lift lobby is more complete and retains the original panelling and carpet.

**Figure 4.21:** The existing sub-division of the double height space and original ceiling above the mezzanine



**Figure 4.22:** Original ceiling in the server room



**Figure 4.23:** The southern lift lobby to Floor 3



- 4.33 The upper floors above the senior executive / mezzanine level of Floor 3 the office spaces have been subject to varying degrees of change and comprise a range of open plan and cellular floor plans.
- 4.34 For example, Floor 4 comprises a principal open-plan space with a small, enclosed office adjoining the northern lift lobby. The internal fittings have been refurbished and a false ceiling has been introduced that covers the original structural beams, apart from a short section adjoining the elevation to prevent the ceiling cutting across the window opening.

**Figure 4.24:** The existing open arrangement and false ceiling to Floor 4



**Figure 4.25:** A contemporary photograph of the original ceiling arrangements



**Figure 4.26:** The modular structure adjoining the window openings of Floor 4



- 4.35 Most of the other floors of the tower are accessed from a central spine corridor with cellular spaces of varying sizes on either side. Access was limited to some floors during the site visit due to corona virus restrictions, however views into several of the spine corridors indicated that the partitions that form the corridor have been subject to renewal.
- 4.36 Similarly, the lift lobbies and associated doorways to the upper floors have also been refurbished and upgraded and most of the existing fittings are relatively recent.

**Figure 4.27:** The lift lobby to Floor 9, original floor tiles remain, however the doors and ceiling have been renewed.



- 4.37 Given the original use, the layout of the services was an important aspect of the Hexagon Tower design. In this respect some earlier fixtures remain but unsurprisingly the M&E system has been regularly updated although the extent to which original fittings survive under floor coverings is unknown.

**Figure 4.28:** Modern services to Floor 4



- 4.38 The principal staircases remain largely unchanged, with the flights of stairs supported by a single, central expressed beam and standing off the enclosing walls with a shadow gap. The treads and risers are expressed in undecorated concrete.

**Figure 4.29:** The expressed structure of the staircase



4.39 The timber balustrades and roll-top handrails are relatively simple. The principal staircase gains a more sculptural character as it rises up through the building and the monumental 'V' shaped glazed screen widens, emphasising the suspended structure of the flights of stairs that pass directly across the windows.

**Figure 4.30:** A detail of the balustrade



**Figure 4.31:** All of the staircase doors have been upgraded, while radiators remain on several landings



- 4.40 Other key spaces that may have been embellished and can generally contribute to the heritage significance of commercial office buildings, such as the Chief Executives suite, board room and staff canteen, have been refurbished and the spaces have either been reconfigured or, in common with the main reception foyer, have been thoroughly refurbished.

### **The Contribution of Setting to Significance**

- 4.41 While the Hexagon Tower represents one of the final stages of the much larger ICI estate it now remains as one of the few surviving elements of the vast industrial townscape that developed on the southern side of Blackley.
- 4.42 Historically, it represents the culmination of that industrial period, however most of the adjoining industrial premises, and the whole of the associated ICI plant have been removed and largely replaced with a late C20th and early C21st residential townscape. The more ambitious plans for a series of towers and linked podiums (Figure 3.5) were not realised and the current setting of Hexagon Tower is considered to make a neutral contribution to its heritage significance.

### **Summary of Significance**

- 4.43 In summary, while most of the interior has been subject to phases of adaptation and refurbishment, the heritage significance of Hexagon Tower is considered to derive from the following factors:

- The association with one of the UK's leading Modernist architects of the period.
- The design of a bespoke building for one of the country's leading manufacturers of the day.
- The distinctive Brutalist form of a tower and associated podium block.
- The method of pre-fabrication construction that was typical of Seifert and Partners.
- The sculptural façades of the tower, which were emblematic of Seifert and Partners.
- The use of mosaic cladding, which was regularly employed by Seifert and Partners.

## St. Peter's Church (Grade II\* Listed)

### Summary of Special Architectural and Historic Interest

- 4.44 St. Peter's Church was originally designated in June 1988, fifteen years after the completion of Hexagon Tower, and the list entry describes the exterior of the church as follows:

*"Church. 1844, by E.H. Shellard. Coursed sandstone rubble with ashlar dressings, slate roof. Six-bay aisled nave embracing west tower, 4-bay chancel with north vestry and south chapel. Early English style. The 4-stage tower has set-back half-height buttresses continued as corner pilasters, octagonal corners to the belfry stage and a plain parapet; a 2-centred arched west doorway with shafts and roll-moulding, a 3-light west window, an oculus in a crocketed diamond surround, a clock face, and coupled louvre belfry windows moulded in 2 orders, with shafts. The west ends of the aisles have tall lancets with shafts, and corner pinnacles; the south aisle is buttressed and has coupled lancets in similar style, and a double chamfered doorway in the 1<sup>st</sup> bay, with shafts and a steep gable; north aisle is much plainer, having chamfered lancets. The chancel has a large 5-light east window of 1869 and coupled lancets to the sides."*

- 4.45 The list entry confirms that St. Peter's was a Commissioners Church and was constructed at a cost of £3,162. The listing summarises the church by stating:

*"This church is particularly impressive for its complete C19th interior with the extremely unusual survival of all the fine box and other pews."*

**Figure 4.32:** The tower and south aisle of St. Peter's Church



### The Contribution of Setting and the Application Site to Significance

- 4.46 St. Peter's Church occupies an elevated position, above Old Market Street, and is set well back from the road frontage within a walled churchyard. It would have enjoyed a commanding position above the contemporary townscape of the former village of Blackley and

the ribbon development that once enclosed Old Market Street. However, that townscape has been subject to several phases of development, clearance and more recently re-development.

- 4.47 The Hexagon Tower terminates the vista westwards from the entrance to the churchyard, although the intervening townscape and sinuous alignment of Old Market Street adds to the sense of separation. Given the patterns of historic development and distance from the church, the application site is considered to make a neutral contribution to its setting and significance.

**Figure 4.33:** The view to the Hexagon Tower from the entrance to St. Peter's churchyard



## 5.0 Impact Assessment

### Introduction

- 5.1 The proposed development has been assessed in accordance with the relevant legislation, national and local planning policies.

### The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 5.2 The 1990 Act incorporates several 'statutory duties' for decision-makers, including the following:

*"S. 66 (1): In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."*

- 5.3 Case law has determined that 'preserve' means 'to do no harm'.

### National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.4 Paragraph 190 requires LPAs to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset, taking account of available evidence and any necessary

expertise. LPAs should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset.

- 5.5 In determining applications, Paragraph 192, requires LPAs to take account of:

*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; and*

*c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

- 5.6 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. *"This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."* (Paragraph 193)

- 5.7 Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, significance to a designated heritage asset, should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 196 requires that in circumstances that would lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

- 5.8 In respect to non-designated heritage assets NPPF paragraph 197, states:

*“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”*

- 5.9 LPAs should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably (Paragraph 200).

## **Manchester Local Plan**

- 5.10 The Local Plan in Manchester comprises the Core Strategy 2012-2027 and the ‘saved policies’ of the Unitary Development Plan. The following policies are relevant to the historic environment aspects of the proposed development:

### **Policy EN 3 Heritage:**

*“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, including those of the City Centre.*

*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.*

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

- 5.11 Policy EN 3 does not refer to ‘non-designated heritage assets’ and is presumed to have been adopted just prior to the publication of the NPPF in 2012.

## **The Proposed Development**

- 5.12 The proposed development comprises the following:

### **Proposed over-cladding and window replacement.**

- 5.13 A visual inspection of Hexagon Tower confirms that the mosaic tiling, particularly to the southern elevation, has deteriorated including cracking to the tiles and several areas that have delaminated and been subject to remedial repairs.
- 5.14 The external mosaic cladding of Hexagon Tower has therefore been monitored for a number of years. The most recent survey “Hexagon Tower Deterioration of Cladding” (Mott MacDonald, February

2020) provides a summary of the previous building surveys in 2014, 2015 and 2018. The surveys have identified defects, including:

- Cracking through tiles.
- Spalling of concrete and mosaic tiles.
- Hollow sounding cladding.
- Defects in the interface between the concrete and cladding (core samples).
- The possible absence of a bonding coat of primer, contributing to the poor strength of the interface (petrographic analysis).

**Figure 5.1:** A current example of cracked mosaic adjoining the entrance to the southern elevation



**Figure 5.2:** Current areas of missing tiles and remedial repairs to the southern elevation



- 5.15 In 2018 a previous survey (Mott Macdonald) identified 250m<sup>2</sup> of hollow cladding and leachate staining to 60% of the window reveals, indicating that some of the detailing was inadequate. A site survey undertaken in 2019, which informed the February 2020 report, confirmed a slight further deterioration and stated that the building presented a serious health and safety risk.

- 5.16 The Mott Macdonald report of February 2020 suggested a range of potential repair options, which are considered further in the accompanying Design and Access Statement (Corstorphine and Wright, February 2021).
- 5.17 The preferred option, which is subject to the current planning application, is to over-clad the existing mosaic cladding with a bespoke anodised aluminium cladding system.

## **Impact Assessment**

### **Hexagon Tower (Non-Designated Heritage Asset)**

- 5.18 The heritage value of Hexagon Tower is derived from a series of attributes, most of which would be unaffected by the proposed development. For example, the historic value of the association with Seifert and Partners, the bespoke office and laboratory design for ICI and the original ambition for a more extensive commercial townscape would not be affected by the proposals.
- 5.19 Similarly, the proposed development would not affect the ability to appreciate the form of the tower and podium, which were common to a range of Seifert schemes. The innovative structure, another Seifert 'trade-mark', and the sculptural form of the principal elevations, including the hexagonal window reveals, would remain unaltered. The form of the dramatic 'gable' elevations and protected undercroft of the entrance would remain key aspects of the building.

- 5.20 However, the materiality of the building would clearly change. The use of a white / grey mosaic was consistent with a series of Seifert's buildings. At close range the building benefits from the texture and diversity of colour achieved by the mosaic tiles, while from slightly more distant views the building appears to be clad in a single uniform material that reinforces the repetitive and sculptural qualities of the elevations.
- 5.21 The mosaic cladding would be retained but would be over-clad. The proposed cladding system would repeat the current pattern of panels and recessed joints, which contribute to the aesthetic of the tower. It would retain the approach of a uniform elevational treatment that would allow the sculptural qualities of the hexagon window reveals to be appreciated as a key part of the architectural language. The mosaic tiles to the undercroft of the southern entrance and the secondary entrance, which has been enclosed behind a glazed screen, would be retained to allow an appreciation of the original materiality.
- 5.22 The colour and tone of the proposed cladding would not have the fine texture of mosaic but has been selected to best replicate the overall appearance of the building in slightly longer views. The pattern of the replacement windows has also been designed to replicate the existing window frames.
- 5.23 The over-cladding of Hexagon Tower would erode the original architectural scheme by covering a material that was associated with Seifert and Partners. However, given the overall form of the building the magnitude of change is considered to be modest.

- 5.24 While the NPPF differentiates between ‘substantial’ and ‘less than substantial’ harm in respect to designated heritage assets it does not provide a range of potential impacts in respect to non-designated heritage assets. However, given the attributes of significance, the need for repair and attention to detail of the proposed scheme, such as the pattern of panels and expressed joints, the magnitude of harm is considered to be low. Furthermore, and in mitigation, the current appearance of the building has suffered as a result of the current defects, which appear to result from a combination of weathering and inadequate detailing.
- 5.25 NPPF paragraph 197 requires the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage assets to be *“taken into account”* and that a *“balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.”* To achieve that balance, the benefits of the proposals are set out in the accompanying Planning Statement (Q and A Planning), while the alternatives to over-cladding and technical benefits for the building are described in the Design and Access Statement (Corstorphine and Wright).
- 5.26 With reference to local plan Policy EN 3, the proposals have been designed to complement the design of Hexagon Tower as far as possible, for example by replicating the pattern of the existing cladding panels and retaining areas of mosaic cladding at the entrance. While overcoming the technical challenges of the building, the proposals would preserve key features, such as the sculptural appearance of the principal elevations.

### **St. Peter’s Church (Grade II Listed)**

- 5.27 The setting of St. Peter’s Church has been subject to several key phases of change, including the original setting in a small, isolated village, the expansion of Blackley Dye-Works and associated industrial development, the northward expansion of Manchester and ultimately the replacement of much of the industrial complex with the current residential neighbourhood.
- 5.28 In this context Hexagon Tower is visible from the south-western entrance into the churchyard and is somewhat out of scale with the surrounding townscape. The proposed over-cladding will cause a slight change within the setting of the church, although the mosaic itself is not legible from the churchyard. However, given the sequence of fundamental changes to the setting of the church, the impact of the proposed development on the setting and significance of St. Peter’s is considered to be de minimis.
- 5.29 Therefore, the proposed development would preserve the setting of the church and would be in accordance with S. 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy EN 3 of the Local Plan.

## 6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Hexagon Tower has been identified as a non-designated heritage asset during a pre-application consultation. It was built between 1971-3 to the designs of Richard Seifert and Partners, one of the leading architectural practices of the post-war Modernist era.
- 6.2 The building is also notable as an ICI headquarters and laboratory complex that was originally intended as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of the Blackley Dye-Works. It demonstrates key aspects of Seifert and Partners work, including the pre-fabricated structural elements, the tower and podium form, the sculptural elevations and also the use of mosaic cladding.
- 6.3 However, surveys of the cladding, and evidence on site, confirm that the mosaic cladding has deteriorated and is now considered to be a health and safety risk (Mott Macdonald, February 2020). Large areas of the cladding have de-laminated. A high proportion of the window reveals appear to be defective and the condition of the mosaic cladding appears to have resulted from a combination of water ingress and inadequate detailing.
- 6.4 The proposed over-cladding has been designed to retain the hexagonal shaped window reveals and repeat the existing pattern of cladding panels and expressed, incised joints. The existing mosaic cladding would remain exposed in the protected spaces of the two southern entrances. The colour and tone of the over-cladding has been selected to minimise the degree of change and to maintain the uniform appearance of the building in slightly longer views.
- 6.5 In this context over-cladding the mosaic is considered to represent a low level of harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. Therefore, the NPPF requires a balanced judgement to be made in weighing the impact on the heritage asset having regard to that low level of harm.
- 6.6 The Design and Access Statement provides an overview of the alternative methods of resolving the current defects and has been informed by a series of condition surveys, which have confirmed the extent of the defective cladding and the process of gradual deteriorating. The proposed development would bring forward a comprehensive, long-term solution to the challenges of the detailing and existing cladding and enable the non-designated heritage asset to benefit from a thorough programme of repair.