



Paul Butler Associates

Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

18 February 2021

Mrs Julie Roscoe
Head of Planning
Manchester City Council
Town Hall
Albert Square
Manchester
M60 2LA

FAO David Brettell

18.1256/ac

Dear Mrs Roscoe,

Bloc (formerly Lowry House), 17 Marble Street, Manchester, M2 3AW

Submission of Advertisement Consent Application for 'Installation of internally illuminated sign and projecting sign to entrance area'

Introduction

On behalf of our client, Bruntwood, please find attached an application for Advertisement Consent for the installation of signage at the main Marble Street entrance to Bloc. Two signs are proposed which include an internally illuminated sign above the entrance doors comprising individual letters to read 'Bloc' and a projecting sign which will contain the signage/branding for 'Bloc', 'Trove' and 'Form'. Glazing manifestations around the windows are also to be installed. The proposed signs form part of the recent refurbishment and improvement of Bloc (formerly Lowry House) which was approved by Planning Permission 125131/FO/2019.

In order to provide a clear understanding of the proposal this letter provides a brief background to the application site and its surroundings; includes a description of the proposed signage; sets out the planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposal; and, assesses the proposed signage against the relevant planning policy context.

Background to the Application Site and Surroundings

The application relates to Bloc, 17 Marble Street, Manchester, M2 3AW. It is a substantial office building which is bounded by Marble Street to the south, Fountain Street to the east and Spring Gardens to the west. The building is roughly L-shaped in plan form and to the north is Phoenix Street and commercial buildings which front Market Street (see figure 1 below).



Figure 1: Aerial view of the site.

The building comprises four main elements. These include: a central 15 storey 'tower', a three storey element aligning Fountain Street, a three storey element aligning Spring Gardens (known as 'The Annex'), and a four storey element aligning Marble Street and taking in the corner with Spring Gardens. The latter element was added in c.2006 as part of a refurbishment and extension scheme by Bruntwood.

The building is currently undergoing refurbishment by Bruntwood as part of the implementation of planning permission 125131/FO/2019 which was approved on 21 January 2020 for 'Change of use of part of existing offices (use class B1a) to cafe (use class A3) and change of use of former bank (use class A2) to offices (use class B1a), with associated external alterations and plant'. As part of the refurbishment scheme the building will be rebranded and will be known as 'Bloc'. Signage was previously installed around the entrance area to the building which can be seen from figure 2 below.

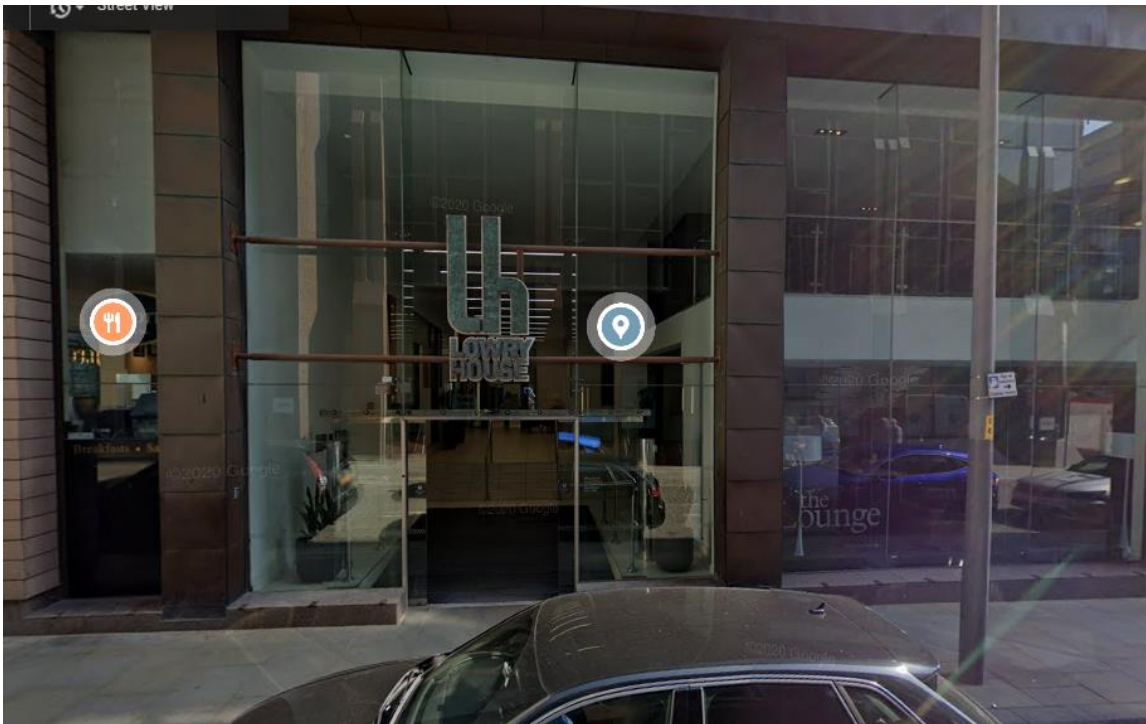


Figure 2: Google Streetview image of the building showing previous signage around entrance area (July 2019).

It is understood that the building dates from 1973 and was designed by Robert Swift and Partners. With the exception of the four storey extension fronting Marble Street, the building is characterised by its brutalist architecture and brown concrete construction. The four storey addition has a more contemporary appearance and comprises large areas of glazing with brown/bronze cladding.

The building is owned and managed by Bruntwood and provides office accommodation in a variety of formats. The office accommodation is accessed from Marble Street via the 2006 extension which includes a reception area/ business lounge/ break-out space. Also at ground floor level, the building includes 'Philpotts' on the corner of Marble Street and Spring Gardens, and two other commercial units on Fountain Street. Natwest bank previously occupied the unit fronting Spring Gardens, but this space has been vacant since the relocation of the bank in 2017. As part of application 125131/FO/2019 this space is to be brought back into use as office accommodation.

The subject building is not nationally listed, it is however located within the 'Upper King Street Conservation Area' (see figure 3 below). Despite not being nationally listed the building may be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset by MCC who may consider the building a good example of a post-war, brutalist office building. In addition there are also a number of nationally listed buildings within proximity to the site.



Figure 3: Plan showing the application property (outlined green) in relation to the boundary of the Upper King Street Conservation Area (red line) and nationally listed buildings (outlined blue).

Uses in the area are varied which is typical of the site's City Centre location. These include shops, cafes, pubs, hotels, offices, and apartments. A notable characteristic of the area is the proximity to Market Street and the Manchester Arndale, the main retail area of Manchester. The site is also identified within the 'City Centre Primary Shopping Area' as designated by MCC's Proposals Map. Due to this location signage displayed on buildings is a common feature.

The Application Proposal

This letter has been prepared in support of an application for advertisement consent for the installation of new signage at Bloc. Two signs are proposed which include an internally illuminated sign above the entrance doors comprising individual letters to read 'Bloc' and an illuminated projecting sign which will contain the signage/branding for 'Bloc', 'Trove' and 'Form'. These signs are described in more detail below:

Sign 1: Internally illuminated 'Bloc' sign

This is to be installed centrally above the main entrance doors to Marble Street. The sign will comprise individual letter which be suspended internally within the building 250mm back from the glazed frontage.

The letters will be fabricated from semi opaque white perspex sheeting with internally illuminated LED lighting. The illumination will be below 600cd/2. The 'Bloc' lettering will measure 1.69m (W) x 0.6m (H) x 0.1m (D). The sign will be installed 3m above the ground level.

Sign 2: Projecting sign

The projecting sign will be installed adjacent to the entrance on a structural element of the building. It will include the coordinated branding for 'Bloc', 'Trove' and 'Form' and will measure 0.6m (W) x 1.2m (H) x 0.03m (D). The sign will project 0.03m from the building with a total projection of 0.63m. The sign will be formed of PPC aluminium in RAL 9011 (graphic black) with white vinyl graphics to provide a visual contrast. The sign will be installed 2.7m above the ground level.

Planning Policy Context

Planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposal is contained within the Town and Country Planning (Control of Signage) (England) Regulations 2007; the National Planning Policy Framework (2019); National Planning Practice Guidance; Manchester's Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2012); Saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan for Manchester (July 1995); and, the Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (2007).

Town and Country Planning (Control of Signage) (England) Regulations 2007

Government Circular 03/2007 Town and Country Planning (Control of Signage) (England) Regulations 2007 requires local planning authorities to exercise their powers in relation to impact on amenity or public safety only, taking into account relevant development plan policies so far as they relate to amenity or public safety.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. A revised NPPF was published July 2018 and updated most recently in June 2019. The document states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Of relevance to the application proposal it seeks to achieve this objective by:

- Setting out that there is a need for the planning system to perform a number of roles, including an economic role, social role and environmental role (paragraph 8).
- Requiring that planning decisions should ensure that developments: will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short-term but over the lifetime of the development; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture; are sympathetic to local character and history including the surrounding built environment; maintain a strong sense of place; and, create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible (paragraph 127).
- Advising that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development (paragraph 130).

- Advising that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts (paragraph 132).

National Planning Practice Guidance

The government published guidance on advertisements via the National Planning Practice Guidance website on 6 March 2014 (Reference ID: 18b).

The guidance states: *'Advertisements are controlled with reference to their effect on amenity and public safety only, so the regime is lighter touch than the system for obtaining planning permission for development'*.

The guidance goes on to state that *'local planning authorities [should] control the display of advertisements in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors'*.

The Core Strategy Development Plan Document (July 2012)

The Core Strategy was adopted on July 2012 and is the key Development Plan Document. Relevant policies within the Core Strategy include:

Policy SP 1 'Spatial Principles': states that development in all parts of the City should make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment.

Policy CC 9 'Design and Heritage': states that development in the City Centre should preserve or enhance heritage assets, including conservation areas.

Policy EN 3 'Heritage': sets out that new developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving/enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance including conservation areas.

Policy DM 1 'Development Management': states that all development should have regard to the following specific issues:-

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail.
- Impact on the surrounding area in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area.
- Effects on amenity.

Saved Policies of the Unitary Development Plan for Manchester (July 1995)

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was superseded by the Core Strategy. However, a number of UDP policies have been 'saved'. Extant policies contained within the UDP which are relevant to the proposed scheme include:

Policy DC18.1 'Conservation Areas' seeks to protect, preserve and enhance the character of the city's conservation areas.

Policy DC14 'Shop Fronts and Related Signs' seeks to ensure that the frontages and signage of commercial premises are in keeping with the character of the building and the surrounding area.

Policy DC15 'Advertisements, hoardings and posters': which states that the Advertisement Regulations require that applications for advertisements be considered only in the interests of amenity and public safety. The Council will take account of the following matters in assessing these interests:

- a) The general location of the proposed development and the effect on visual amenity;
- b) The scope for posters and hoardings to make a positive contribution to the locality;
- c) The design of the structures, and the relationship with any premises on which they are located;
- d) The effect of the proposal on permanent redevelopment of the land;
- e) Public safety resulting from the positioning of the design of the display;
- f) The ease with which the structure is capable of being satisfactorily maintained;
- g) The use of hoardings to screen vacant sites or buildings during development, or where development is known to be imminent;
- h) The number of advertisements in the locality and their cumulative effect on visual amenity.

The Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (2007)

Guidance contained within this document of relevance to the proposal includes:

Chapter 2 'Design': which states new development, whether for residential, industrial, commercial or retail purposes, should have a high standard of design making a positive contribution to the City's environment.

For the reasons identified below, it is considered that the proposal accords with the above planning policy guidance.

Planning Appraisal

The key material considerations against which the signage should be considered include: effect on amenity; and, effect on public safety. The relationship of the proposed signage with the status of the conservation area location of the building is also a material consideration.

Principle of Signage

The application proposal involves the installation of new building signage to the main entrance area of Bloc. This will comprise internally illuminated individual letters and a projecting sign. The signage is required to enable identification of building and the entrance area and will reflect the refurbishment and rebranding of the building as 'Bloc'. This projecting sign also includes branding for commercial tenants 'Trove' and 'Form'.

Both signs will have a sleek and modern appearance reflecting both the design ethos of the building and branding of Bruntwood. Manifestations to the glazing around the entrance will also reflect the Bruntwood brand to provide a recognisable identity across their building which is an important objective for the company.

As noted previously the site is located in part of the City Centre which is characterised by commercial premises. Existing businesses already display various types of signage, confirming that the principle of the proposed signage is acceptable in this location. The former signage located above the main entrance which is shown by figure 2 has recently been removed as part of the refurbishment of the building. The presence of signage around the entrance is clearly already established.

Design, Visual Appearance and Effect on Amenity

In accordance with national and local planning policy it is necessary to consider the impact of the proposed signage in terms of design and visual appearance.

The internal illuminated sign will be installed centrally above the main entrance to the building which is the logical location. The sign will comprise individual letters which will be suspended internally within the building 250mm from the face of the glazing. The lettering will be a simple serif typeface which will be clearly legible and both contemporary and inkeeping with the 1970s date of the building. The individual letters will have internal static illumination which will not exceed 600 cd/m which complies with Manchester City Council's usual requirements. Lighting units and wiring will be concealed and not be visible. There are no residential properties that would have visibility of the proposed signage or be affected by the proposed illumination.

The projecting sign will also have a sleek and contemporary appearance. It will have a simple rectangular form with a depth of only 0.03m. The sign will have a graphite black background with branding in white vinyl lettering to provide a strong visual contrast. The projecting sign will be a clean, clear and unfussy addition to the building. By including branding for 'Bloc', 'Trove' and 'Form' this avoids the requirement for additional signs which could potential create a more cluttered appearance.

In summary, the proposed signage is high quality and will enhance the appearance of the building and will be consistent with relevant provisions of the NPPF; Core Strategy Policy SP 1, CC 9, and DM 1; Saved UDP policies DC14 and DC15; and, the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD.

Effect of Signage on Public Safety

Planning policy guidance states that new signage should not present any risk to highway or public safety.

The projecting signage will be installed at least 2.7m above the ground level ensuring there is no obstruction to the footpath or highway. This will also ensure that the signage will not be prone to vandalism or any other forms of antisocial behaviour. The sign will be securely attached to the building to ensure public safety and will be appropriately maintained by Bruntwood.

There are numerous existing signs located on buildings/premises in the vicinity of the site and the proposed signage will not act as a distraction to motorists. Nor will the static subtle illumination of the individual letter sign represent a risk to highway safety.

For the above reasons the proposal will not have an adverse impact on public safety and is consistent with provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy Policy DM 1.

Relationship of Proposed Signage to the Upper King Street Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings

As noted previously, the proposed signs are of a carefully considered, high quality design. They will enhance the appearance of the building and contribute to the character and appearance of the Upper King Street Conservation Area. Similarly the proposed signs will not have an adverse impact on the setting of any listed building located in proximity to the site. Overall the proposed signs are considered to be an enhancement compared to previous signage installed at the building.

In summary, due to the proposed location and design of the signage, the proposal will have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the Upper King Street Conservation Area, and will not affect the setting of any nearby listed buildings. The proposal is therefore consistent with provisions of the NPPF; Core Strategy Policies CC 9 and EN 3; and, the Guide to Development in Manchester.

In conclusion, it is clear that the proposed signage will not have an adverse impact on amenity or public safety; will have a positive impact on the building and on the character and appearance of the nearby Upper King Street Conservation Area; and will not adversely affect the setting of any nearby listed buildings. As a result, the proposal is in accordance with relevant national and local planning policy guidance.

Submission Information

The following information has been submitted in support of the application:

- Completed Application Forms for Consent to Display Signage.

Drawing No.	Rev	Drawing Name	Scale	Papersize
AL(05)233	-	Location Plan	1:1250 / 1:500	A3
AI(05)232	-	Proposed Building Signage Details	1:50 / 1:20	A3

The above information has been submitted alongside the application forms via the planning portal. The application fee (amounting to £132) will be paid during submission of the application.

We look forward to receiving confirmation that the application has been validated. In the meantime, if you require any further information in order to determine the application please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Taylor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ralph Taylor BSc. MPLAN MRTPI

Senior Planner

CC Natalie Ernest, Bruntwood