

21 December 2020

Planning
Manchester Council
PO BOX 532
Manchester
M60 2LA

Dear Sirs,

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT FOR THE ALTERATION OF THE FRONT ELEVATION OF OCEAN HOUSE IN RELATION TO CYCLE/AMENITY REFURBISHMENTS

This design and access statement has been prepared by CBRE's Building Consultancy in support of a Planning Application for the external alterations at Ocean House. It is made on behalf of the building owners, KW Towers Ltd., at the request of Manchester City Council following pre-application advice.

This statement presents a case for the removal of steel fencing and replacement with a window and low level facing brickwork, to form an extended amenity facility, located at basement level along the front elevation of Ocean House.

CONTEXT**Building**

Ocean House is a three-storey office building, with a basement offering parking, cycle storage and shower facilities and a plant room located in the roof void. The building's sole use is commercial office space. The building is serviced by two lifts to the core and reception at ground floor level. The building is unlisted.

Location

Ocean House is situated in Towers Business Park. The business park is located within Greater Manchester, under the East Didsbury ward. The main entrance to the business park leads from Wilmslow Road (A5145). The site is set with the boundary of Didsbury St James Conservation Area.

Towers Business Park is a highly successful business park. A strong engagement with placemaking, along with offering high specification office accommodation, has resulted in increased retention in tenant occupancy levels. Thus the site sustains a significant number of jobs on site, representing an important element within the local economy of Didsbury and wider North West Region.

PROPOSAL

In August 2020, CBRE's Building Consultancy were instructed to undertake a feasibility study of how to improve facilities for active travel at Towers Business Park. Of the various options proposed, the preferred solution was to extend the existing amenity block within the basement of Ocean House, which is accessible to all tenants of the business park. As part of the proposals, the amenity block will offer 5 shower cubicles, a WC and a drying room with locker facilities. This will increase the site's shower offering to 25.

To extend the existing amenity block we are seeking approval to make external alterations at basement level, to the front elevation of Ocean House. We propose removing one existing bay of painted steel fencing, to be replaced with a double glazed window unit with uPVC frame (colour RAL 6005), with low level red brick infill below. This replacement will match the current external elevation to the existing amenity block.

There is currently no enclosed secure bike storage at Towers. The proposed works will also include installing various models of bike stand, to cater to varying user abilities, secured within steel cycle caging.

For further detail, see drawings:

- 001 – Ocean House Existing Basement
- 002 – Ocean House Proposed Basement
- 003 – Ocean House Existing Elevation
- 004 – Ocean house Proposed Elevation

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (CONSERVATION AREA)

Ocean House is located within Didsbury St James Conservation Area. **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** outlines that Conservation Areas are designated heritage assets and their conservation is to be given great weight in planning permission decisions. Section 71 of the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** details that local planning authorities are under a duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas.

In 2012 Manchester Council published its **Core Strategy (2012)**. The Core Strategy, and remaining Unitary Development Plan saved policies, is the benchmark document in the Manchester Local Plan. The following policies are particularly relevant to this application:

Policy EC1 – Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester Priorities for ensuring continued economic growth include; improving access to jobs for all via public transport, walking and cycling. Ensuring design makes the best possible use of a site or building in terms of efficient use of space, considers the needs of users/employees of a site/building for access via walking, cycling and public transport and reduction of opportunities for crime by applying current best practice in security design.

Policy EC9 – South Manchester Development within existing employment and economic locations, such as Towers, should have regard to ensuring efficient use of existing employment space; improving public transport, walking and cycling connectivity between residential neighbourhoods and employment locations.

Policy CC9 – Design and Heritage Development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments.

DC18.1 – Conservation Areas The Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals within Conservation Areas.

CYCLE FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Through policies, such as EC1 within the **Core Strategy (2012)**, and investment in infrastructure via schemes such as the **Active Travel Scheme (2020)**, Manchester City Council has clear objectives to improve facilities for active travel across the city.

By refurbishing the existing amenity block at Ocean House, proving new showers and a drying room, along with installing secure bike storage facilities, we understand that the proposed works will encourage a greater increase in users of the site choosing a more active commuting style, such as cycling, running, walking etc. As a result the proposals complement Manchester City Council's investment in cycling.

HERITAGE STATEMENT/IMPACT ON THE CONSERVATION AREA

Through pre-application advice, Manchester Council have requested this statement looks to address the impact of the proposal on the Conservation Area. Didsbury St. James Conservation Area was designated in 1970, and it contains the largest concentration of listed buildings in Manchester (outside the city centre). Key features defining the character of the area include mature tree-lined routes, garden walls, hedges, gate posts, and porches. Architectural styles vary from Classical and Gothic of public buildings, to the French Chateau style of The Towers themselves, along with simple vernacular styles. The material palette consists mainly of red brick with blue slate roofing and stone detailing. Two listed buildings are situated within Towers Business Park, these are:

- The Towers (Shirley Institute), Grade II* (List Entry Number: 1270516)
- The Lodge to the Towers (Shirley Institute) and Attached Gatepier, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1254974)

Ocean House is located to the south east of Didsbury St. James Conservation Area. Constructed in 1990s, the building is concrete framed, with external elevations formed of a combination of glazed curtain walling with structural columns clad in brickwork. The roof is covered with profiled metal sheets, built off a steel frame. The building's form and materials are sympathetic to the conservation area, however it does not provide any historical significance.

The proposed alterations will replace one bay of painted steel fencing with materials (Upvc windows and facing brickwork) that are already existing on the building. Given that the works are located within the undercroft basement, changes to the overall visual appearance of the building are minimal. Furthermore, the works have no line of sight to the listed buildings within proximity (The Towers and The Lodge), therefore the works will have no impact upon the setting of these heritage assets.

Considering this, we would advise that the works will have no detrimental impact on both the buildings, and the conservation area.

ACCESS

Towers Business Park is accessed via Wilmslow Road (A5145). The proposed works will have no impact on access to the site and circulation around the business park. The works have been designed so that they will not reduce the number of parking bays available within the Ocean House basement.

The works are expected take 4 weeks. Deliveries will be made direct to the basement of Ocean House, via the rear elevation ramped access. The waste will be kept in a designated store within the basement, and removed following completion of the works.

CONCLUSION

The proposals will encourage active travel to Towers Business Park, consistent with the objectives of Manchester City Council as referred to above. By specifying existing elevation materials at Ocean House, we have eliminated the risk of causing detrimental impact to both the building and Conservation Area.

We trust that this design and access statement is sufficient in its support of the planning application for the alteration of the existing front elevation of Ocean House, in relation to cycle/amenity refurbishments. Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us on the details provided.

Yours Sincerely,



JENNIFER CRAIG – BUILDING SURVEYOR
NATIONAL BUILDING CONSULTANCY