



citizens **design** bureau

Design and Access Statement
MJM External Signage
 30/11/20

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November 2020

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0.1 Introduction

The Manchester Jewish Museum is currently located within the Grade II* Listed former Spanish and Portuguese synagogue on Cheetham Hill Road built in 1874. The museum offers opportunities for visitors to learn about key tenets of Jewish religion and customs as well as providing a fascinating insight into the social history of the Jewish Community in Manchester, through the museum's collection.

Citizens Design Bureau Architects were appointed to develop Architectural designs for Manchester Jewish Museum following a competitive tender process in March 2016 funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The proposed project involves the refurbishment of the Grade II* Listed former synagogue as well as a new extension. Both planning and listed permission was granted on Sept 2017 (application ref 116668/FO/2017 & 116669/LO/2017) and more recently Section 73 applications in Oct 2020 (125011/JO/2019 & 125012/JO/2019). This current application is for planning & listed permission to the external signage for the project.

The signage has been developed by Graphic Designers; Twelve (in conjunction with Citizen Design Bureau) who have been working with the museum to develop the graphic language for the building including internal way finding, website and branding.

The signage has taken cues from the main building extension sharing materiality (corten) and historical references (ie the moorish pattern design) whilst being sensitive to the listed context but competing with the hecticness of the street and neighbouring signage.



2.0 Historical Context

History and significance

Manchester Jewish Museum aims to share the stories of Jewish Manchester to as broad an audience as possible and in so doing to actively promote the acceptance and understanding of all faiths and cultures. The external signage needs to highlight events both in the existing synagogue space and in new build facilities for the whole community.

The Manchester Jewish Museum is significant on many levels, both as a building and as a museum collection, not only locally to its neighbourhood of Cheetham Hill, but also nationally and internationally. Unlike previous synagogues built in the Georgian and Regency eras, which were often hidden away and designed to blend in with surrounding English architecture, the Manchester Portuguese and Spanish Synagogue, as it was known, reflected the growing status and confidence of the Jewish community in the 19th Century following the realisation of British Jewish emancipation in 1858. It was positioned on a main street leading out of the city centre along with a series of other 'cathedral synagogues' built in the 19th Century, and stands as arguably the purest remaining example of a Moorish style synagogue in Great Britain (Kadish 2011), at a time when the Moorish style was thought in the words of Hyman Henry Collins, one of the leading Jewish synagogue Architects of the day, to 'symbolise the spiritual considerations which are the essence of the Jewish creed'. (Kadish, 2011) The style holds particular significance for the Sephardic textile community it was built for, who hailed from Gibraltar, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece, Corfu, Turkey and Aleppo in Syria and helped build Manchester's status at the time as the cotton capital of the world. The building is now the only largely intact synagogue on the Cheetham Hill Road, saved by the care and dedication of its local community to lead a new life as a museum of Jewish cultural life from 1984.

It is through its function as a museum that its wider significance deepens, for its unique collection of oral histories, photographs and artefacts chart the origins of the Jewish community in Manchester from its first Jewish visitors in the 1740s, up to the present day, sharing stories of immigration, industrialisation and refuge that are relevant not only to the local Jewish community, but also to the broader story of the growth of Manchester and Industrial Britain as well as the local community's influence on the global Zionist movement. Through the lens of the local Jewish Community, the collection explores what it means to be an immigrant or refugee and the nature of identity and diversity, touching on themes of huge relevance to our wider society.

Manchester Jewish Museum aims to share the stories of Jewish Manchester to as broad an audience as possible and in so doing needs signage to actively promote the acceptance all potential visitors.



Historic map showing significant buildings in the area surrounding Manchester Jewish Museum

3.0 Current Context

Industrial Setting

The museum is placed in an unusual setting on Cheetham Hill Road, with a Safestore warehouse on one side and a builder's merchant on the other. The existing Listed building is lone remnant of an urban fabric that used to have a much finer grain of terraced houses before WWII bombing.

One of the great opportunities of the project will be to raise the museum's presence on Cheetham Hill Road, a busy urban thoroughfare populated with 20th Century warehouses and wholesalers. Any signage should lift its presence on the road, ensure that it is visible for people approaching from both directions along the road, amplifies the presence on the street and be welcoming and dynamic that strikes a balance between respect for its historic background yet serving to magnify and call attention to its presence on Cheetham Hill Road, distinguishing it from the visual noise of signage, advertising, street lighting and a multitude of building styles.

In recognition that Cheetham Hill Road is a busy thoroughfare, rather than a civic, pedestrianised city centre street, it is particularly important to address the building's visibility to passing vehicles and to ensure that its function as a civic building in an otherwise exclusively industrial and retail area is clear and inviting.

Urban setting strategies:

1. The signage must be visible. On Cheetham Hill Road with fast moving traffic and minimal footfall. The signage must also compete with quite a hectic
2. The building has lost its physical status as a landmark. The signage approach should not be the creation of a quiet, recessive extension, but of interventions that amplify and call attention to the existing synagogue building.
3. The forecourt presents a notable opportunity to remove physical and cultural barriers to entry, drawing people in off the street, presenting clarity of whats to offer to visitors and passersby alike.
4. Amid the visual noise of Cheetham Hill Road, the signage must be well lit - particularly to take advantage of catching motorists' attention on morning and evening commuter journeys

A key issue for the museum is that visitors often miss them when driving past. Signage will need to complete with alot of 'noise' on the street and a other prominent neighbouring signage. New signage elements will be welcoming and vibrant, achieved through quality, materiality, placement, clarity and lighting rich in character that plays off and complements the existing building rather than being quietly subservient, minimising its collective street presence.



Street sketches highlighting the visual noise and clutter of Cheetham Hill Road, demonstrating that any new signage must be visible and draw attention to itself and the synagogue



Photographs of site in current context

5.0 Signage Design

Location & Identity

The brief was to create an engaging, robust and proportional external signage strategy which can be broken down in 6 key elements (highlighted in yellow on the plan to the right):

1. Corten totem
2. Wall Signage
3. Lettering above the entrance door
4. Learning Wall sign
5. Deliveries Sign
6. Glass manifestation

A combination of signs is required:

1 - that is visible to passing motorists, setting out what the museum is and what it contains in a clear and striking way.

2 - curated signage - for passersby who want more information about whats on.

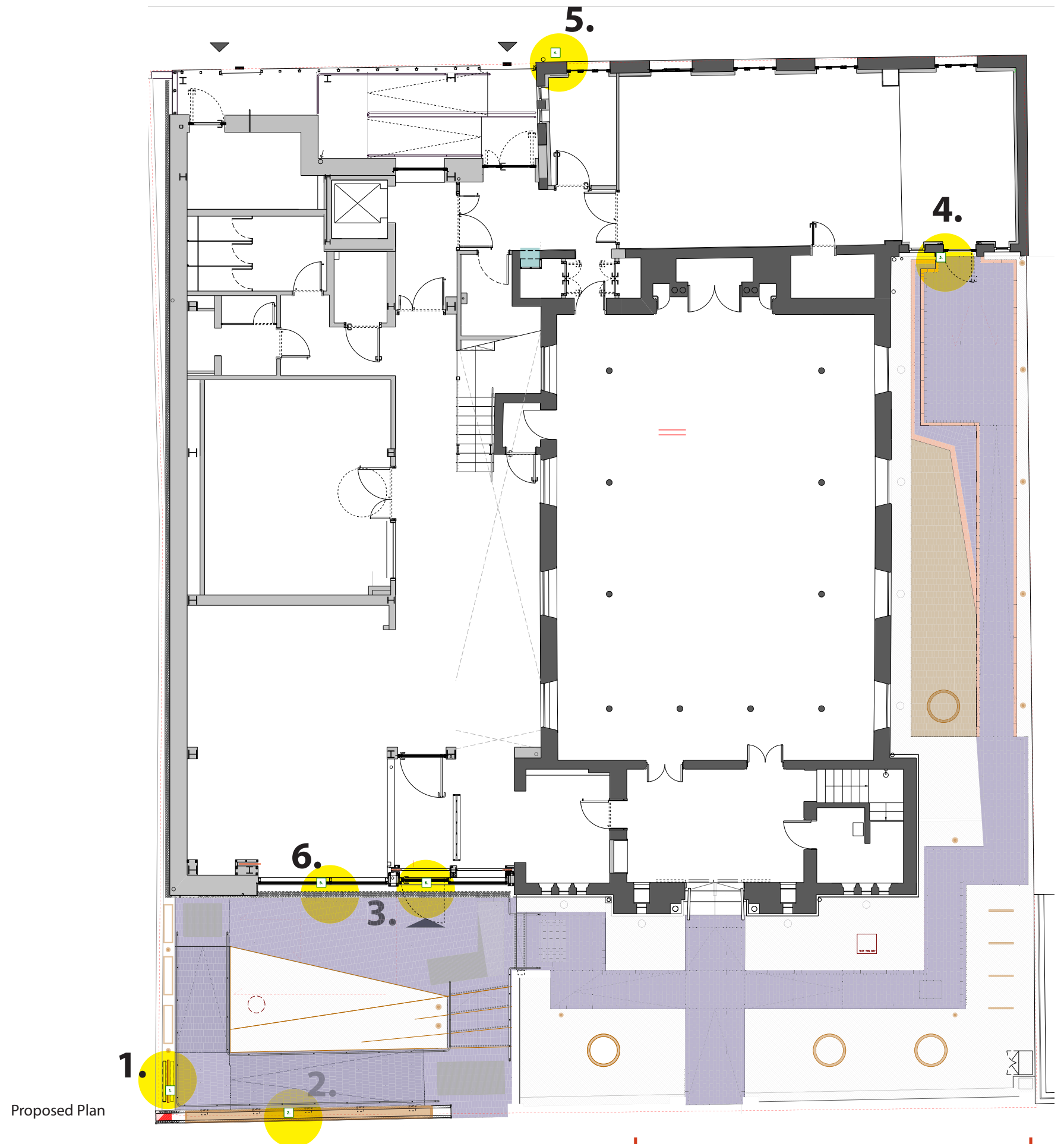
3 - Destination sign. This clarifies where the entrance is - in particular distinguishing the new entrance from the old.

FONT

A new font has been developed for the museum and used across the signage. The bespoke MJM typeface family is developed based on the concept of 'connecting', each variant: the dot, single-line, duplex and the solid font are sharing the same fundamental skeleton and graphically incremental. They are used carefully in consideration of accessibility and brand messaging. This has been used in various ways across the signage package.



Twelve's concept sketch for the typography



Proposed Plan