



Atelier MB
Urban Architects

Design & Access and Heritage Statement
to support a Listed Building Consent
Application for
86 Princess Street,
Manchester

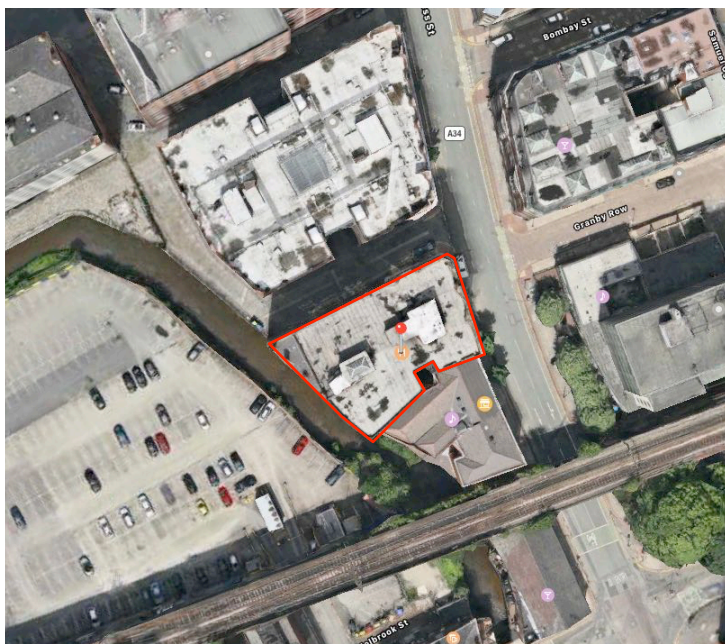
Client:
See Saw Community Ltd

September 2019
Job 1871



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Aerial view of the site with red line highlighting 86 Princess Street.

1.0 Introduction

This statement accompanies a Listed Building Consent application for changes to the ground floor and first floor units of 86 Princess Street, Manchester (Manchester House). It was written in September 2019 by Atelier Heritage on behalf of the building owners. Its author is Laura Jessup, MA History and Theory of Architecture, PG Cert. Conservation of the Historic Environment.

The application follows a previous consent granted for the whole refurbishment of the building (Ref. 115335/LO/2017) which was approved and is currently near completion. The current proposal is for a fit out to accommodate a co-working space with memberships for single desks and small free-standing cubicles. The ground floor will also double as a reception to the whole building, with a refreshment facility for use by the wider office space.

2.0 Description

Manchester House is located at 84-86 Princess Street, close to its junction with Charles Street and opposite Granby Row. The building sits next to Asia House, the two are separated by an access route which continues around the back of Asia House. The route was previously gated and used for deliveries to the loading bay towards the back of the building. It has more recently been converted to an entrance with glazed door. The rear elevation of Manchester House faces straight on to the River Medlock, rising directly from the bank, with no pedestrian access.

The building is 6 floors over a ground floor, basement and sub-basement. The front elevations are Edwardian Baroque in style. The architect was I. Birkett, the same as for Asia House. This is acknowledged in the listing but has been elsewhere attributed to Fairhurst, possibly because he was the architect of the Refuge Assurance main building on Oxford Road, for whom Manchester and Asia Houses were built. The name of the architect (Birkett) is visible on the original plans located in Manchester archives.

The building sits within the Whitworth Street conservation



86 Princess Street (formerly known as Manchester House) - street view from Princess Street.

area. It is part of a group of former packing and shipping warehouses with together characterise this part of the city. These include India House, Lancaster House and Asia House. Manchester House is smaller in scale and is on the edge of the group, lacking the finer detail and grandeur of the other historic warehouse, perhaps the reason it is listed at Grade II rather than the Grade II* status of the others.

Historic England listing extract:

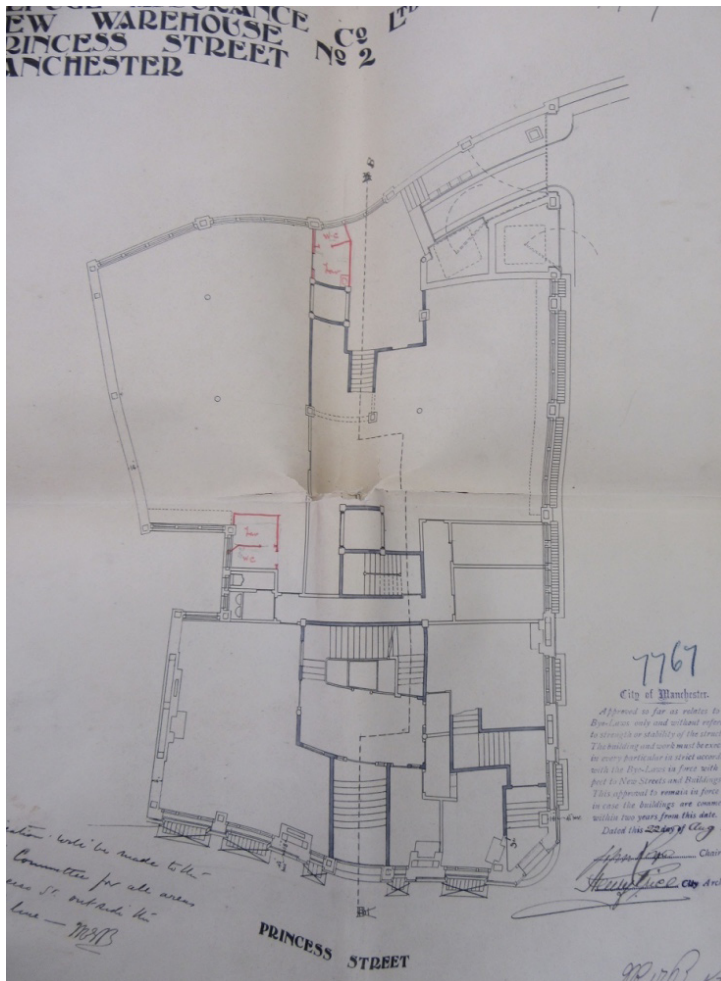
'MANCHESTER

SJ8497NW PRINCESS STREET 698-1/32/338 (South West side)

No.86 Manchester House

GV II

Shipping and packing warehouse, now restaurant, offices etc. 1914, probably by Birkett; altered. Iron frame with cladding of brown sandstone and some buff brick (roof concealed). Irregular plan at right-angles to street, with chamfered right-hand corner. Free Baroque style. Six storeys with basement and attic, 4 bays (1:1:2:1 windows) plus the corner; with a grey stone plinth, channelled rustication to the first 3 floors, giant Ionic pilasters to the 4th and 5th floors rising from banded pedestals at 3rd floor, those flanking the centre bay coupled and all with festoons, a moulded frieze with large central cartouche, prominent mutuled cornice with a large mutuled segmental pediment arched across the centre of the attic storey, which has a small cornice and interrupted parapet. At ground floor the centre has a doorway and side windows in Venetian window form, with open segmental pediment and cartouche crest, the outer bays have round-headed windows with run-out voussoirs and triple keystones, and the corner has a square-headed doorway with pilaster jambs and carved tympanum under a segmental hood. The 1st and 2nd floors have windows with moulded architraves and cornices, those at 2nd floor on slender consoles with pendent festoons; the windows at 4th and 5th floors also have moulded architraves, those at 4th floor with small cornices; and the attic has a 4-light Diocletian window in the pediment, and windows in the other bays with keyed architraves and cornices. Interior not inspected. Forms southern end of uninterrupted linear group of similar buildings on this side of Princess Street. Listing NGR: SJ8429697579'



Original ground floor plan.

3.0 History

The original drawings confirm the premises were used by the Refuge Assurance Company, labelled 'warehouse number 2' with Asia House being warehouse number 1. These buildings were sublet to various companies. The earliest trade directory reference is in 1911, earlier than the 1914 date included in the listing extract.

The presence of a loading bay and arms/teagles on the original drawings indicate that goods were delivered and dispatched directly to and from the building. Shipping/packing warehouses of this date were more than just storage areas: they included inspection areas, making up areas, packing and delivery functions as well as offices. The majority of shipping business was concluded in The Exchange, and a limited number of visitors came to inspect samples. Laying out benches in front of large windows gave natural light for quality checks by buyers and workers and for making up. The more formal areas including most offices were located in the front part of the building, with more functional use in the rear, and this can be read in the varying external elevation treatments.

Trade directories show that number 84 had a separate entry, reflected in the plan form with the access from 84 directly upstairs. This separation is no longer evident.

The ground floor has a corner entrance, of high significance. Later internal sub-divisions have been removed in the works approved 2017. The lift is non-original, though the tiled staircase is of high heritage significance, with the exception of newly installed tiles at lower level.

4.0 Ownership

The building is currently owned by LWP Eastbrook Property Ltd.

5.0 Significance

Manchester House is an example of early 20th century shipping warehouse and externally the building has high



Image showing the existing ground floor with exposed timber floor, columns, brick walls and ceiling, following the strip-out works completed as part of a previous application (Ref. 115335/LO/2017).



Image showing the existing first floor and ceiling following the works completed as part of a previous application (Ref. 115335/LO/2017).



Image showing an existing shadow gap detail within the building, the principle of which is to be followed for any new partitions.

evidential value with medium historical significance, this is evident to a lesser extent on the inside, where various piecemeal changes have taken place. Nonetheless, it retains significance as an important member in the wider group of warehouse structures in this part of the city.

The latest refurbishment removed much of the lower quality later additions and retained the more significant elements, deemed to be the columns, walls, floors, ceilings, staircase and windows. On the ground and first floors, later excessive subdivision/lowered ceilings have been removed, restoring some of the more open plan nature of the space and original spatial characteristics.

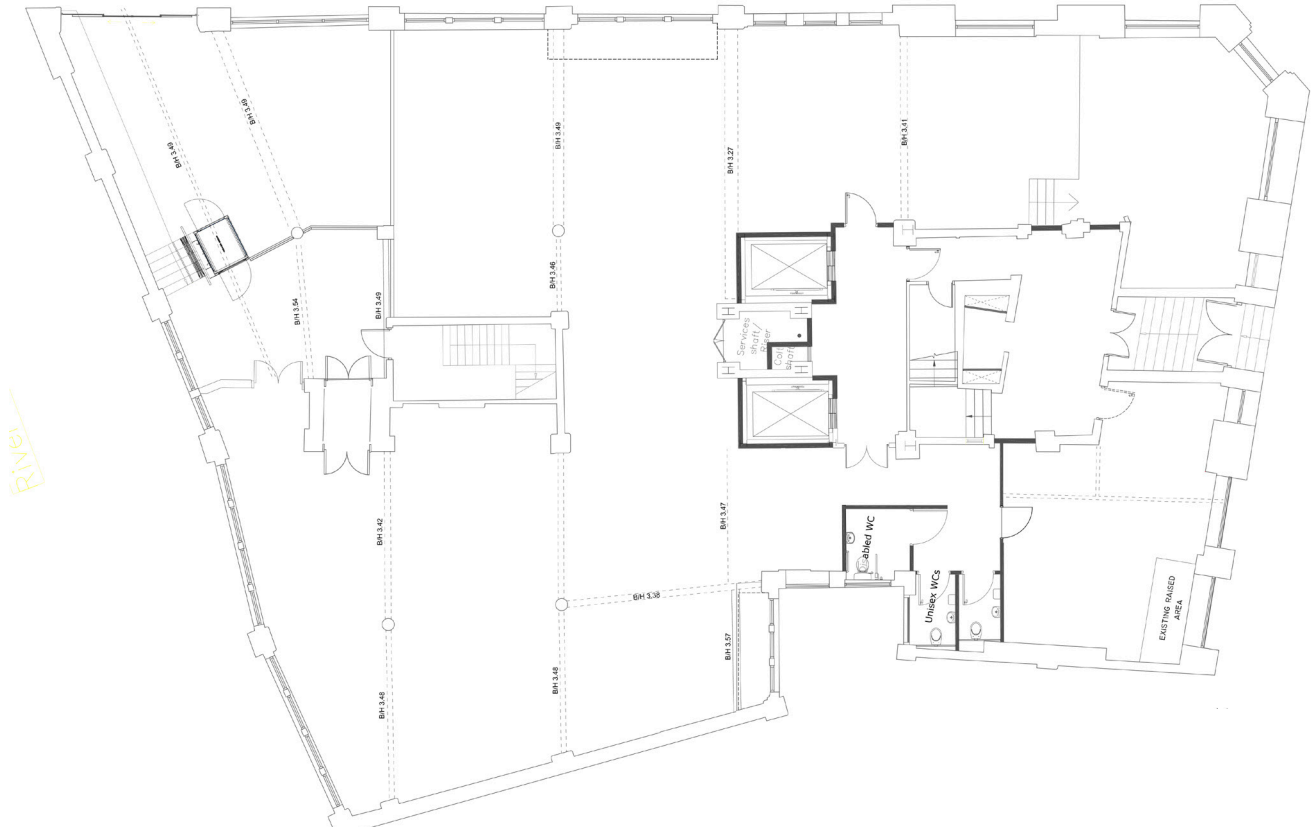
The significant parts of the unit concerned with this application are limited to the original walls and ceiling detail, the beams and columns and the entrances and staircase. With the exception of the staircase (high significance), they do not display particular aesthetic or design merit above the standard type, but as a whole they contribute to the character of the building and are of medium significance. No works are proposed to the beams, windows, staircases or columns, with the exception of some fixings to windows. The ceilings will remain as existing, with minimal fixings for lighting. There is limited painting of walls. These changes, explained in more detail below, do not constitute substantial harm, nor will they significantly alter or negatively impact the character and historical significance of the building.

6.0 Changes and impact

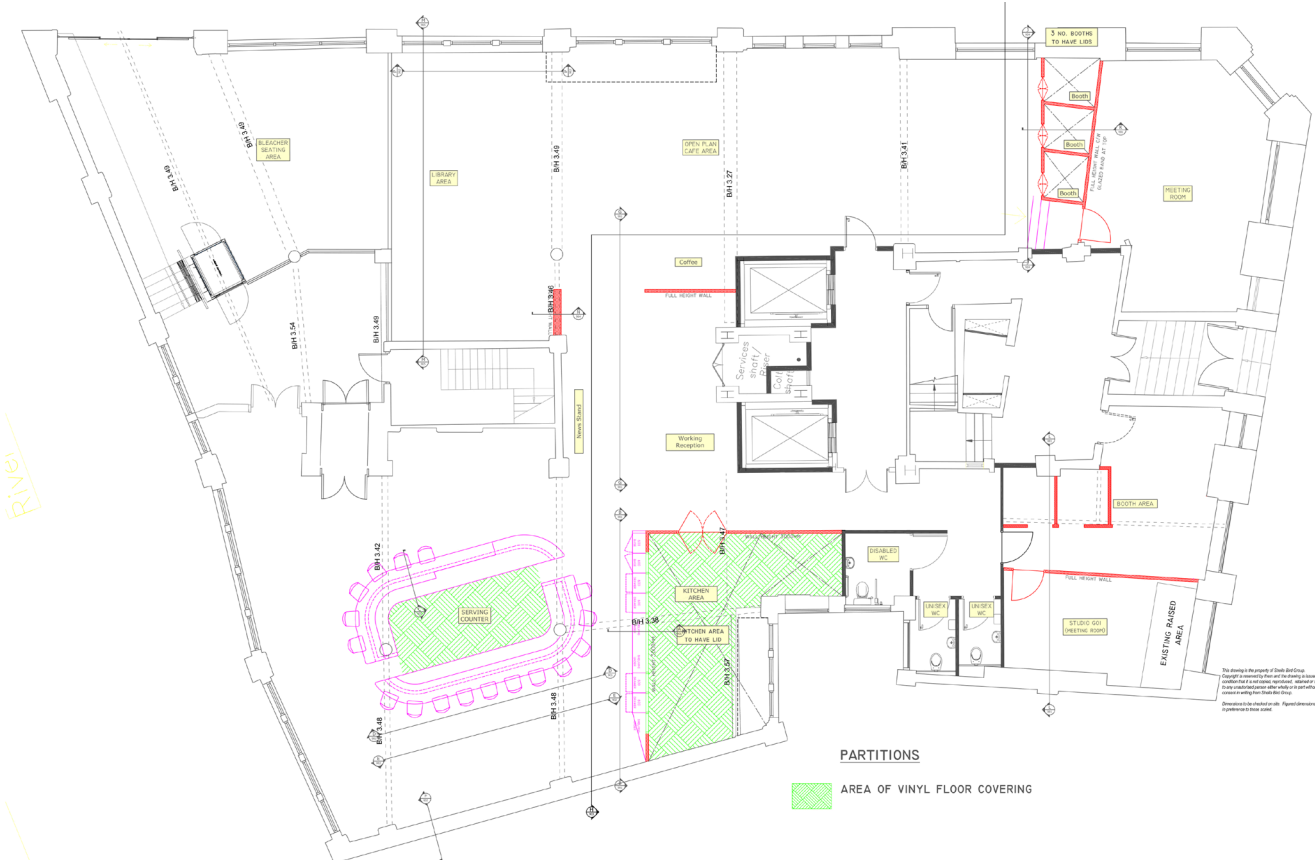
The proposals are detailed in the accompanying drawings submitted with this application. The changes comprise:

Addition of a limited number of full height walls

The walls are proposed in order to create the meeting booths to the rear of the space, the reception and the entrance lobby. In order to be readily identifiable as contemporary additions, each wall will have a 10mm shadow gap between the new wall and the original fabric. It is accepted that a degree of separation is required in order that the space can be reused. The positioning of the walls and their restricted number has a neutral impact on



GROUND FLOOR EXISTING LAYOUT



GROUND FLOOR LAYOUT



Image showing the existing partitions and ground floor area where the new kitchen is proposed to sit.

the architectural and historical significance of the space. In the booth working areas, the new walls are topped with slim framed glazing. These will allow views of the wider ceiling and are seen as mitigation to partially retain the open characteristics of the space. The proposed use of the space means that the creation of unnecessarily excessive sub-division has been avoided, which is seen as a positive continuation of the already approved refurbishment scheme. **Impact upon significance: low.**

Creation of a new kitchen area

This will be created with walls which do not reach to full height and a 'lid' over, to create a contained space. This approach will avoid an interface between the existing ceiling and the new kitchen. **Impact upon significance: low.**

The insertion of a bar in one area of the ground floor

The bar will be a free-standing piece of furniture and as such will not have a significant impact upon existing historic fabric or upon heritage significance of the building. The back wall of the bar will be a metal mesh grille, which allows for views through. **Impact upon significance: neutral/low.**

The covering of a limited area of floor with vinyl covering

A limited portion of the floor (within the kitchen area and reception) will be over-laid with a vinyl floor covering. There will be a layer of material (loose lay membrane) between the new finish and the existing floor to protect the surface underneath. This also ensures that the covering can be removed at a later date without damage to the existing floor. The raised floor area will be covered in vinyl, over a newly installed plywood floor (previously approved) therefore this will not need a loose lay membrane as it does not involve historic fabric. **Impact upon significance: low.**

Lighting affixed to various locations including walls, beams and windows

A full lighting scheme forms part of the proposal. It includes suspended lighting and fixtures which protrude from the walls as well as small wall lights to be fitted to the timbers between windows. A limited number of



Image showing existing cable trays and lighting to the upper floors at 86 Princess Street. Similarly, the new lighting is to be fixed to the underside of trays or to the plastered soffits.



Image showing the existing rear windows, floor and ceiling, which are to be kept exposed.

penetrations will be required for fixings, but cables will run free without housing at these locations. **Impact upon significance: low.**

Addition of free-standing waist-height partitions

Workspaces on the first floor will be created with free-standing partitions which do not reach to full height. This approach will avoid an interface between the existing ceiling and the new dividing partitions. **Impact upon significance: low.**

All beams, ceiling detail, windows and columns will remain as existing, as will the entrance/circulation areas. Limited fixings to windows are described above.

7.0 Planning Context

Policy relating to listed buildings is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, updated February 2019. It requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy adopted July 2012).

NPPF paragraph 189 states that in determining applications, local authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets, including contributions made by their setting. This report fulfils that requirement.

Paragraph 192 sets out, 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.' The re-use of the ground floor for creative co-working office space is seen as a viable and consistent use, especially as the building previously housed a number of offices. The co-working use limits the use of full height partitions where booths and smaller free-standing spaces are used in place of standard walls. This is seen as a positive response.

Paragraph 196 states, 'where a development proposal will

lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.' The plans do not constitute any degree of substantial harm to the overall historical or architectural significance of the asset, the new interventions being limited in both number and in terms of their direct impact upon historic fabric.

MCC Policy, Core Strategy EN3 states that '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.' and 'Proposals which enable the reuse of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.'

The proposed changes to accommodate the new use are complimentary to the existing character of both the building and the area, protecting the significance of the unit and bringing a viable long-term use to the site.

8.0 Access Statement

No changes are proposed to the existing accessibility to the building.

9.0 Conclusion

The changes proposed are considered to have a minimal impact upon the significance of the building; they do not harm its characteristic features as a former warehouse. They have been designed with consideration for the existing historic fabric. There will be 'less than substantial harm' to the listed building. Where a degree of harm does exist- through minimal fixings and sub-division, it is outweighed by the benefit of the space being brought back into viable use compatible with its significance. Additionally, the proposals do not have any harmful impact on the adjacent listed assets nor upon the Conservation Area.