Planning & Heritage Statement

in support of the planning application for

Replacement windows, alterations to rear elevation and security gates at Grosvenor Court, Alexander Road South, Manchester M16 8GZ



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1 Introduction

1.1 This statement provides the comprehensive planning and heritage assessment in support of the application for alterations to Grosvenor Court. The statement has been drawn up with regard to the Historic England publication entitled "Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance".

1.2 The heritage assessment is undertaken within the statement and then incorporated into the overall planning assessment explaining the merits of the proposal.

2 Proposal

2.1 The application has been formulated through a long period of careful consideration, during which time the Council Planning Officer has been engaged. The proposals fall into three separate elements:

1. Replacement of all timber windows on the two principle road facing elevations with white Upvc windows of the same pattern.
2. Removal of 9 x timber sash windows on the rear elevation and replacement with matching brickwork.
3. Provision of a security gate to the vehicular access off Deerpark Road.

2.2 The details of the development and justification are explained in the remainder of this statement and on the accompanying plans.

3 Site and Surroundings

3.1 The application site is a three storey apartment block dating from the early 20th century, comprising 9 x 2 bedroom and 3 x 3 bedroom self-contained apartments.

3.2 The building is located at the junction of Alexander Road South and Deerpark Road, within the Whalley Range Conservation Area. It has facing brickwork to the ground floor front elevations and render above, with a tiled hip roof. The building is of a simple, unremarkable Art Deco design and is located within a landscaped setting, behind a walled boundary which has been retained from a previous Victorian development.

3.3 There are two front entrances to the building; one to the Alexander Road frontage and one to Deerpark Road. The entrance porches are embellished by a simple classical pilaster surround, above which is a recessed two-storey stained glass window, set within a metal framework. These original features will remain unaltered.



View of the principle elevations from Alexandra Road South

3.4 All other windows on the two principle elevations are of white painted timber casement design with two mullions, a horizontal glazing bar and fixed central glazing. These are not original windows and were an approved replacement in 2005 (see Planning History below).

3.5 The rear elevations are of utilitarian appearance, with timber sash windows, brick elevations and balconies.



Views of the rear elevations from the car park

3.6 A vehicular access off Deerpark Road leads to a walled parking and refuse/recycling storage area to the rear of the building.



Vehicular access off Deerpark Road



Walled car park from the vehicular access

3.7 Adjacent to the site on the Alexander Road South frontage is a single storey Spiritualist Centre. On the opposite corner of Alexander Road South and

Deerpark Road is a substantial three-storey Victorian property in multiple residential occupation. The adjacent property at no.2 Deerpark Road is a two-storey Victorian house. Opposite the site across Alexander Road South is Alexander Park.

3.8 The site is within walking distance of a wide range of shopping, educational, employment and social facilities, as well as excellent public transport links.

4 Background

4.1 The building provides good quality managed rental accommodation and since its acquisition in 2013, the owner has ensured its continued upkeep and improvement, which includes a regular maintenance programme.

4.2 This improvement included a £15,000 contract for repairing, refurbishing and repainting the exteriors of the 33 windows on the principle elevations during the summer of 2017. This involved scaffolding for over 12 weeks and yet it is only expected to protect the current timber frames for a maximum of five years before it will require refurbishment/repainting. Realistically given the local weather conditions this period is more likely to be 3-4 years. The images below show the damage before the repair and repainting work (this was approximately 4-5 years after the previous owner last painted the frames).



Examples of the condition of the window frames before the last renovation

4.3 These flats have previously suffered from condensation issues, so trickle vents were incorporated at the time of the repair works in the summer of 2017. The addition of these vents helped to reduce the problem, but in some cases condensation and damp persists and the addition of extra trickle vents should serve to address this issue. The current timber window profile does not allow for the addition of any extra vents, however the proposed window replacements have four trickle vents per window instead of the current two.

4.4 Considerable research has been undertaken to assess the options for replacing the windows, both in terms of the design and the cost, which is a significant factor. The following is a summary of the alternative patterns which would return to something similar to the original window design:

1. Crittall Steel windows from KJA Services (supply and install)
    a) With cosmetic bars - £65,623.83 inc VAT
    b) With true steel glazing bars - £125,643.14 inc VAT
2. Crittall Steel windows from Jennyfields (supply only)
    a) With toughened glass throughout - £93,588.00
    b) With standard glass throughout - £78,738.00
3. Aluminium (crittall style) from The Heritage Window Company (supply and install)
    a) £78,595.20 (including the traditional style handles and main contractor discount)

4.5 None of these very expensive options is considered to provide a cost-effective solution, given the context and nature of the property. By comparison, using the Rehau 70c UPVc profile proposed, the cost will be a maximum £33,000 for supply and installation. Whilst this remains a considerable cost, by replacing the high maintenance timber windows, there will be a significant increase in the comfort and security of the tenants, whilst guaranteeing that the building will continue to look its best. To put the economic case into context, the current owner paid £900,000 for the whole building in 2013 and last had it valued at £1mil in 2017. So to spend 10% of the value of the property to replace only half the windows in the property isn't viable.

4.6 The proposed windows will offer improved thermal performance over the existing, by providing better seals, air tightness and thicker glass with a larger gas filled void.

4.7 The chosen replacement window solution is of a pattern which reflects the current design and from the street, the difference will be imperceptible.

4.8 The nine windows on the rear elevation which it is proposed to brick up serve a boiler/store room in each flat and the boilers are wall mounted below the windows. For safety reasons these windows have to be permanently secured shut as they are above boiler flues. Being timber sash windows, even though they remain closed they are not airtight. The secondary reason is that having condensing boilers at such a low level means maintenance is difficult, as there is no room to fit a filter such as a magna-clean; sediment from the radiators/pipework is more likely to find its way into the boiler heat exchanger and so reduces the reliability of the boilers thus affecting the tenant's comfort. Furthermore, because of the nature of the boiler/store room, tenant's use it as a store which can block the boilers. Bricking up of the windows allows the boilers to be mounted higher on the wall, the fitting of filters and easier access for maintenance whilst also solving the gas safety issue.

4.9 The proposed security gates result from observations by the managing agents and tenants, which people who do not live in the apartments are parking in the car park for long periods, with other people arriving and sitting in their cars for long periods. This has created considerable concern about these activities, security and the fear of anti-social behavior. By limiting access to the car park to tenants would help eliminate this problem.

4.10 The gates will be inward swing opening and constructed of polyester powder coated steel (RAL 9005 Jet Black) to be installed with keypad access control, magnetic lock and automated opening system.

4.11 All of the apartments have access directly onto this car park via an external fire escape and break-ins at the property have always been via these back doors which are not visible from the road. The installation of a gate would therefore limit pedestrian access to the more secluded areas of the building, which should significantly reduce the risk of burglary.

4.12 Arrangements will be made to provide all tenants with access as well as for the collection of waste and recycling.

5 Relevant Planning History

There has been one relevant application which was for the replacement of the original metal window frames with wooden frames (ref: 075372/FO/2005/S1) which was granted permission 17 June 2005. The permission was implemented.

6 Pre-Application Advice

6.1 The proposals have been developed over a long period of time, during which informal discussions have taken place with the Council's Planning Officer.

7 Relevant Planning Policies and Considerations

7.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

7.2 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It sets out the requirements for the planning system and explains that the purpose of the system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. There are three mutually dependent dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental and there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

7.3 The NPPF also provides guidance on building a strong competitive economy, good design, adapting to climate change and conserving the historic environment, all of which are relevant considerations which have been taken into account in formulating the application.

7.4 Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Manchester Local Development Framework (LDF) comprises of the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2012 and the retained policies of the Unitary Development Plan, dating from 1995.

7.5 The proposed development meets the test of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF as follows:

7.6 Economic role – the proposals will provide a cost-effective means of repair and improvement, which will reduce maintenance costs and limit the financial impact on tenants.

7.7 Social role – the improvements will enhance the standard of the accommodation and improve security.

7.8 Environmental role – The proposals will provide a long-term solution to the maintenance of the building, providing improved quality of accommodation, whilst preserving the character of the conservation area.

7.9 **Manchester Core Strategy**

7.10 The Core Strategy Policy SO3 supports the principle of high quality housing which helps meet housing need.

7.11 Policy S06 seeks to protect and enhance both the natural and built environment of the City and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change etc and the application is fully in accord with this.

7.12 Policy EN 1 provides Design Principles and expects development to follow the seven principles of urban design:

- Character: a place with its own identity
- Continuity and enclosure: a place where public and private places are clearly distinguished
- Quality of the public realm: a place with attractive, and successful outdoor areas
- Ease of movement: a place that is easy to get to and move through

- Legibility: a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand Adaptability: a place that can change easily
- Diversity: a place with variety and choice

Design and Access Statements submitted with proposals for new development must clearly detail how the proposed development addresses the design principles, reinforces and enhances the local character of that part of the City and supports the achievement of the Core Strategy Strategic Objectives.

7.13 Policy EN 3 Heritage explains that the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods. 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.

7.14 Policy EN 4 seeks to reduce CO2 emissions by enabling low and zero carbon development.

7.15 Policy EN 8 expects all new development to be adaptable to climate change in terms of the design, layout, siting and function of both buildings and associated external spaces.

7.16 Policy DM 1 provides Development Management requirements which should be considered, including the following:

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail.
- Impact on the surrounding areas 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, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise.
- Accessibility: buildings and neighbourhoods fully accessible to disabled people, access to new development by sustainable transport modes.
- Community safety and crime prevention.
- Design for health.
- Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space.

- Refuse storage and collection.
- Vehicular access and car parking.
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage.
- Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private.
- The use of alternatives to peat-based products in landscaping/gardens within development schemes.
- Flood risk and drainage.

7.17 **Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP)**

7.18 Of the retained UDP policies, DC18.1 deals with Conservation Areas where the Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals. The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering various issues including the following:

i) the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces;
ii) the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings;
iii) the desirability of retaining existing features, such as boundary walls, gardens and trees

7.19 All of the above policy and guidance has been carefully considered in the formulation of the application, which is considered to be in conformity with the Development Framework.

8 Heritage Context

8.1 The application site is located within the Whalley Range Conservation Area. In order to assess the impact of the proposals, it is first of all necessary to understand the significance and level of importance of the heritage asset. This assessment needs to be proportionate as explained in paragraph 58 of the former PPS5:

> ...an applicant will need to undertake an assessment of significance to an extent necessary to understand the potential impact (positive or negative) of the proposal and to a level of thoroughness proportionate to the relative importance of the asset whose fabric or setting is affected. Given the obvious burden of the process, local planning authorities will need to be careful to only ask the applicant for what is genuinely needed to satisfy the policy requirement.

8.2 The Council ‘s Conservation Area Character Appraisal is therefore the starting point for this assessment, which provides the following context:

Introduction

Whalley Range conservation area is situated approximately two miles south of Manchester city centre.

Much of the area, which is predominantly residential, is contained within 63 acres of flat land purchased for building in 1832 by a prominent banker, Samuel Brooks, for a sum of £9,600.

The conservation area was designated in October 1991, with boundaries drawn to include some later housing, extending to Alexandra Road to the east and Upper Chorlton Road to the west.

History

During the Industrial Revolution, Manchester rapidly expanded beyond the confines of what is now known as the city centre. It took in existing townships and established new residential areas some distance out, separated from the town as it was then by fields.

Whalley Range was one of the first suburbs, creating what Samuel Brooks termed "a desirable estate for gentlemen and their families" where people could escape the increasing congestion in the growing industrial city. Roads were laid out and building plots were sold with certain conditions to ensure that development was appropriate to Samuel Brooks's vision.

The estate was laid out between two farm tracks, now Withington Road and Upper Chorlton Road. The tree-lined avenues of Dudley Road, Whalley Road and Chorlton Road form the basis of the estate. Samuel Brooks's own Whalley House (named after the town of Whalley in Lancashire, his place of origin) was built at the south end of Whalley Road.

The house was demolished during the 1930s to make way for the Woodlawn Flats development. The eastern side of the conservation area around Alness Road was built in the latter half of the 19th century on land sold by Lord Egerton of Tatton.

In 1874, an early example of an aquarium was opened to the public on Alexandra Road. Although twice the size of any previous aquarium, it proved to be commercially unsuccessful, and closed down just two years later. Shortly after closure, the building was incorporated into St. Bede's College, which was itself amalgamated with St. Bede's School in All Saints in the City.

Whalley Range and its buildings today

The layout of Whalley Range as established by Samuel Brooks survives today as an area of large houses on tree-lined avenues. Many of the original houses remain, with new development taking place on the site of demolished houses and on the site of plots left vacant during the initial stages of the area's development. For example, around the turn of the century, in both Railton Avenue and Whalley Avenue, sixteen terraced houses were constructed on single building plots.

For some years after the Second World War the area went into decline. Families living in the large houses moved away, further from the city centre, leaving some properties to decay.

Some redevelopment took place and many houses were converted into bedsits for multiple occupation.

Recently however, there has been further investment in the area, with the upgrading of properties or conversion to self-contained flats or nursing homes and residential institutions. Housing associations have been actively refurbishing buildings and developing vacant sites.

Most vacant sites have now been built upon and development pressure has more recently turned towards applications for demolition of the old large houses and the subsequent redevelopment of their sites.

Designation of the conservation area is aimed at halting this trend and actively encouraging refurbishment of what is left of the fine quality original housing stock. Several buildings in Whalley Range are individually listed by the Department of the Environment.

The most prominent building in the Whalley Range conservation area is the former Lancashire Independent College on College Road. It is a gothic-style stone building with octagonal tower and pinnacles, completed in 1843. Recent refurbishment has converted the building into a residential college for the General and Municipal Boilermakers' Union. The entrance gates and octagonal gate piers are in the same style and are also listed buildings.

St Bede's College is an ornate red brick and terracotta building in the Italian renaissance style, which incorporates the redundant aquarium building. The eleven bays of the college form an incomplete facade as construction ceased in 1880. A chapel to the rear was added in 1898, followed by several subsequent additions.

St Edmund's Church is a stone building with a steeply-pitched slate roof. Designed in the geometrical Gothic style, it has paired clerestory windows with tracery. The building typifies the problem of overly large premises for modern use as a church but it is of a quality which justifies an imaginative proposal.

The Church of St Margaret on Whalley Road is a stone building with a slate roof and a tall spire. It was designed in 1843 and consecrated in 1849. The architects were Locker & Newsham with N. T. P. Harrison.

The three pairs of houses on Withington Road that are numbered 4 to 14 form a distinct group of stucco villas. The central pair are Gothic style with matching italianate style on either side.

There are many other fine houses of a high quality which were built according to rules and restrictions set by Samuel Brooks and written into the ground leases.

The Council's explanatory documents go on to provide the following:

Control of Development

Development control in Whalley Range is aimed at encouraging the area to flourish whilst paying attention to its special architectural and visual qualities.

Developments will frequently require planning permission or Conservation Area Consent, and sometimes both. Even some minor works such as alteration to boundary walls may require the prior approval of the City Council.

Demolition of most buildings as well as construction in conservation areas, requires specific permission. Advice should be sought at an early stage, from the South Area Team.

Owners of property in the area are encouraged to retain the original character and detail of their houses or premises.

When submitting an application for a new building, designers should look at the wider area rather than just the site. It is important to see how the proposal fits into its context. In this regard, the elevations, form and massing of adjacent buildings should be included in a submission for a new building.

Improvement and enhancement

It is envisaged that small-scale development and refurbishment will take place from time to time. The main aim of designation is to ensure that the character and quality of both the buildings and the spaces between them is retained. As with all conservation areas, attention must be paid to maintaining harmony with regard to building heights, the type and the colour of materials.

The owners of properties will be encouraged to replace like for like when considering repairs to walls, roofs, windows and mouldings. Artificial materials such as Upvc for windows or concrete for walls will not be encouraged, and the painting of brick and stone elements is considered to be inappropriate and conducive to rapid deterioration.

Walls are generally red or orange-red brick with stone dressings, but some houses are buff brick with yellow stone. Decorative brick patterning is used particularly at eaves or gables, either polychromatic or in the form of corbelled brackets. Stone brackets support projecting balconies with ornate wrought-iron balustrades.

Roofs on Whalley Range houses were originally predominantly blue slate, and this as opposed to other materials, should be used as a replacement. Ridge tiles often have decorative fins, and finials at every gable may be terracotta, timber or wrought iron. Barge boards and eaves boards are moulded and fretted with decoration.

In existing buildings, windows should follow the pattern of the originals they replace, almost invariably vertically proportioned with little or no subdivision of the sashes into small panes. The frames should be made from moulded timber sections and trimmed with moulded architraves. They should also be set in the same plane as the originals. In new development, windows should be set back at least one brick depth from the front plane of the wall.

Where boundary treatments are being renewed, walls - preferably the originals - should be stone or brick with recessed panels and stone copings. They should be in character with the area, which frequently includes evergreen hedges. These are most commonly privet, but holly and laurel are also seen.

Every effort should be made to save gateposts and incorporate them in new developments. They should be replaced in stone or brick rather than concrete or timber. Each of these solutions requires less maintenance than the original cheaper alternatives.

None of the original cast-iron street-lamp standards remain today, having been replaced with modern steel poles. If funds were to become available, there would be an opportunity to replace lamps and other street furniture with Victorian-style castings, in order to re-create some of the original character of the area, providing the levels of illumination meeting with present-day requirements.

8.3 Character Assessment

8.4 The Whalley Range Conservation Area covers a wide area with a variety of development forms and detailing, which are described above. This part of the assessment therefore looks more closely at the immediate surroundings, within which the building is seen. The following images show this part of the conservation area.



Aerial view at the time of the last renovation



View of the property and the adjacent Spiritualist Centre from Alexandra Road South



No. 6 Alexander Road South



View of Deerpark Road looking towards Alexander Road South



Roy Grainger Court, Deerpark Road

8.5 Grosvenor Court lies at the north eastern edge of the conservation area, the boundary of which runs along the northern and eastern edges of the building curtilage. With the exception of the Spiritualist Centre, the immediately surrounding area is characterised by two and three-storey Victorian Villas, set within generous gardens, most of which are in multiple occupation, with the

addition of the late 20th century Roy Grainger Court flats. The historic properties fronting Alexandra Road South tend to be of greater scale than those along Deerpark Road. The presence of trees and mature landscaping gives the area an Arcadian character.

8.6 Grosvenor Court is of an age and style which is inconsistent with the prevailing character of the wider area, having a lower scale than most property on Alexandra Road South, a classical Art Deco design with horizontal emphasis and white rendered upper elevation. Grosvenor Court does not have any significant architectural merit, however it does provide a contrasting design which provides a strong corner feature on the edge of the conservation area, which respects the building Victorian lines.

8.7 The immediate area is therefore somewhat fragmented architecturally, but largely retains the original pattern of development. Original fenestration details on the buildings close to the application site have largely been replaced with UPVc of varying forms and quality. Similarly, the original metal windows on Grosvenor House have been replaced, only in this case with timber casements.

8.8 **Conclusion of Heritage Assessment**

8.9 Grosvenor Court has a unique design at variance with the character which the conservation area is intended to protect. However, it is not without its own character and whilst of modest Art Deco pretention, it provides a distinctive presence on the edge of the conservation area.

8.10 The Council's advice within the conservation area is to generally discourage UPVc replacement windows in preference for the use of original materials. This guidance needs to be considered in the context of the unusual and specific circumstances relating to Grosvenor Court. In this case the original metal window frames have previously been legitimately replaced with inferior timber casements, which now represents the fall-back position.

8.11 The proposed UPVc replacements will be of high quality and of a design which will be imperceptibly different from the timber frames which they will replace, when viewed from the public realm. From a visual perspective, this minor change will therefore preserve the character of the conservation area.

8.12 The replacement of the rear windows with matching brickwork will not be seen from the conservation area and in any event the change will have no material impact on the character of the building. The effect of this aspect on the conservation area is therefore neutral.

8.13 The addition of the side gate, which is of simple, functional design, will not have any visual impact within the street scene and will therefore preserve the character of the conservation area.

8.14 The overall assessment of the proposals is that they will preserve the character of the conservation area.

8.15 There is a relevant precedent for comparison at Mayfield Mansions, 20 Alexandra Road South, a simple classical building dating from around 1930. Originally designed with 16 pane metal window frames with slim glazing bars, these have been replaced throughout with UPVc frames of a simple design.



Mayfield Mansions, 20 Alexandra Road South

9 Planning, Access and Design Considerations

9.1 The planning considerations of this application are relatively straight forward and mainly relate to the heritage aspects dealt with above, however the other planning considerations are explained below.

9.2 The principle of this minor development is supported by the Council's policies, which encourage the maintenance and improvement of the housing stock including development which reduces the use of energy and CO2 emissions, making it more sustainable.

9.3 The design of the windows closely resembles the existing pattern and the removal of the rear windows and replacement with brickwork has no adverse planning implications.

9.4 The gate is set back from the highway to allow a vehicle to stand within the site if the gates are closed, so there is no adverse effect on the free and safe operation of the highway. The addition of the gate will improve security for the residents and reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour, which is a positive material planning consideration.

10 Overall Planning Assessment and Conclusion

10.1 The proposal will preserve the character of the conservation area, improve the sustainability of the building and enhance the living conditions and security of the residents. As such it accords with the spatial strategy.