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FAO Emily Booth

Date: 12 October 2018
Ref: 60-001
By e mail: e.booth@manchester.gov.uk

Dear Emily,

Planning Application Ref 118164/FO/2017 – 44 Canal Street, Manchester

Further to your letter dated 25 July 2018, please find enclosed an addendum to the Design & Access Statement on heritage matters to secure validation of the planning application. In your subsequent email dated 20 August 2018 we received comments from the Conservation and Access Officers, which I am keen to discuss along with our supplementary comments.

Context

We are pleased that the Council recognises the positive contribution that 44 Canal Street makes to the Conservation Area. However, we would like to question the reference to 'long range oblique views' given the tight street pattern surrounding the building, particularly at the rear of the property?

You make reference to the roofscape being 'particularly visible from the northern corner', but this is not substantiated by our own photographic evidence, which is appended to this letter. The vibrant and busy street scene of Canal Street and its surrounding area dominate and the roofscape from this point does not draw the eye, particularly from street level. Furthermore, the property is set in the context of taller buildings (including the large new development on the opposite side of Rochdale Canal) which dominate the street scene from the northern corner.

The proposed works to the roof would be visible from surrounding, higher properties, but the same is true for other buildings in the vicinity, many of which have alterations to their original rooflines, as evidenced by the appended photographs.

We agree that the property contributes to the setting of the Grade II listed building on Richmond Street. This is addressed in the enclosed addendum to the Design & Access Statement.

Dormer Windows

The proposed dormer windows will enable one additional bedroom space to be provided (one dormer window already exists on one side). This will enable the upper floor of the property to maintain a viable use. For structural reasons, they sit on the gable and the coping is retained and still visible. Based on the

comments above relating to the context of the site and limited visibility of the rear façade, at no point would both dormer windows be visible at the same time from street level.

In terms of the comments on the impact of the proposed dormer windows on the verticality of the existing rear elevation, there is limited visibility of the rear façade from public viewpoints. Whilst some of the existing structural window openings on the rear elevation extend across the first and second floor levels, they do not dominate the architectural language. The ground floor lean-to extension is very much a strong horizontal influence. The rear gutter line and the change of pitch point of the mansard roof are equally influential and provide a horizontal 'cap' to the rear facade.

In a city roofscape context such as this, the majority of roof-level features, both near and within distant view, which include glazing, penthouse balconies, service equipment related, and roof line/pitch changes, are all read in the context of horizontal lineage. It would be inappropriate for dormers to have any vertical emphasis. This would detract from the clear architectural break between rear elevation brickwork and roofscape features.

Replacement Rooflights

As shown on drawings reference PL-213 (rev A) and PL-220 we can confirm that the proposed replacement roof lights will be conservation rooflights, in the style shown on the appended image.

The mansard windows are all functioning, but none of these are original and are of standard timber window sections, they are not intended or suitable for mansard face use, as is evident by the poor condition of the openings which are suffering from significant water ingress. The replacement of these with conservation rooflights will resolve the water ingress issues and also create an improved mansard profile which is flush with the roof plane.

Replacement Rear Windows

The application proposes the replacement of the rear façade windows, which are bricked up internally on the second floor and will be reinstated which is a significant enhancement. The applicant is unable to gain access to these windows and, due to limited visibility, their precise condition is unknown. The proposal will retain the principles of the fenestration, with no structural opening alterations proposed and the opening up of the majority of windows which have not had any function for many years. The proposal intends opening these features to the benefit of a new use, providing high quality, energy efficient, acoustically protected accommodation. It is anticipated that the frames will be constructed of timber and these will be retained where feasible, once a full assessment of their age and condition has been undertaken on commencement of development.

From oblique views and through the steel security railings it appears that the majority have, at some stage, had sections cut out or altered. Most are also blocked up on the inside, so are likely to have suffered from damp ingress, due to lack of air movement/ventilation. Only the staircase window is not full internally lined, and that is split and boarded up at half landing level. It should be noted that, with the exception of the bay 1 and part of bay windows, none of the rear elevation windows are visible from the public domain. The windows in bays 1 and 2 are currently obscured by the redundant fire escape stairs and various pieces of mechanical extraction and air conditioning equipment.

In terms of their appearance, in order to provide both heat and sound insulation to modern, acceptable levels, installing small panes becomes unworkable. The glazing itself can be an issue but, from an aesthetic aspect, increased pane thickness increases weight which would be reflected in the dividing mullion and

transoms. Whilst 'stick on' sections can be a solution, an improved aesthetic option we may suggest would be an internal film creating the pattern of the upper small square subdivision in the 'flat arched' heads. We would be happy to provide a sample should this be required.

The application has put forward design proposals which seek approval to reinstate the windows should it prove necessary. We would think a condition on the planning permission requiring the submission of a window condition assessment, in order to agree whether any can be retained in future would be sufficient, if required.

External Features

The Conservation Officer suggests that the existing fire escape is retained as an original feature rather than be removed as is currently proposed. The existing fire escape has no functional purpose and would not comply with current fire escape requirements. There is no right of way, access or egress at the bottom of the former drop down ladder, so this external staircase can no longer serve any practical function and will deteriorate in time.

Whilst the desire to retain the staircase for visual historic reference is understood, its presence could create an unacceptable risk in the case of a fire situation should it be used as a fire exit by mistake as the stairs would be a 'dead end'. The potential to retain the fire escape and install restrictors on the rear opening windows to avoid egress onto the structure was discussed prior to submission, but still deemed an unacceptable fire and safety risk. To avoid such risk would require substantial reconstruction works to the fire escape, which negates the point of its retention.

The applicant's position is that it should be removed but he would be willing to consider whether it can be repurposed within the proposals in any way that does not detract from the safety aspect.

For the avoidance of doubt, the internal layout of the property complies with Building Regulations as a single staircase building, subject to relevant travel distances, fire protection and smoke lobby provision which can all be readily met. The proposal meets the required standards and so the accommodation is safe without the need for any external escape stairs from any level.

In respect of the other suggested external improvements, such as light fittings, wiring and CCTV cameras, these fall outside of the scope of the planning considerations for this application for change of use. The applicant would be willing to work with the City Council's Conservation Team to discuss how such measures could be incorporated in the proposals on grant of planning permission.

Access

In response to the comments by the Access Officer regarding lift provision, as discussed with you at out on-site meeting in May, the options investigation submitted with the Design & Access Statement demonstrated that the provision of a lift could not be provided without substantial building works. As explained, retaining the original layout and features of the building was a key driver in the proposed design, as well as avoiding any external alterations to the façade of the building and this was accepted at our meeting.

In terms of internal accessibility, as referred to in the Design & Access Statement, the applicant is willing to incorporate accessible and inclusive features in the internal fit out. We would be willing to accept a condition requiring provisions to support ambulant disabled people be installed to enable improved access within the building.

Overall, the application has been running for nearly 12 months and there is no reason to withhold consent. The proposed change of use will bring this building back into productive use which should be encouraged. We trust that the proposed application can be considered in the context of all issues relating to this application to change the use of the property to C1 (hotel) use, which include the need to balance the issues at stake, including heritage conservation and maintaining a viable use for the mostly vacant property. The proposed development is compliant with development plan policy as well as national planning policy which supports sustainable development.

I would be glad to discuss this matter further with you, please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss any aspect of this letter in further detail.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



cc. Bridgewater Properties
PZvi Architects