

THE ATRIUM
MANCHESTER
DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

SEPTEMBER 2017 | LRW-7664-L(00)39B

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1.0 Introduction

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The Atrium is a group of buildings located at the corner of Whitworth Street and Princess Street in Central Manchester bounded to the north by the Rochdale Canal and to the west by a multi storey car park on Beaver Street. The group of buildings are arranged around a central courtyard “The Atrium” and consist of Central House a Grade II listed building at the corner of Princess Street and the canal, Johnson House, which adjoins Central House fronting the Canal and Beaver Street and Dominion House, the largest of the buildings which adjoins Johnson House and extends from Beaver Street along the principal Whitworth Street frontage and turns the corner onto Princess Street.

Around the turn of the century, 20th to 21st, the buildings as a group were converted into apartments to be let over a short term, approximately a week to six months, and the central courtyard was roofed over with an ornate glazed barrel vaulted canopy forming the entrance to the apartments from Princess Street. The lower level of Johnson House, below street level on Whitworth Street, became a restaurant in the reconfiguration and the upper corner unit above street level at the corner of Whitworth Street and Princess Street was occupied by a bank which later closed and was replaced by a café.

Due to the heritage nature of the buildings the design has taken into consideration the sensitivity required in dealing with listed buildings, especially their elements of greatest significance.



Site Location Plan

2.0 Context

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The Atrium is located within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area within which many grand industrial buildings fronting onto Whitworth Street and Princess Street are located and the area contains some of the largest Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings in Manchester. A Historic Buildings Report has been prepared by Donald Insall Associates demonstrating the importance of the heritage aspects of the buildings, both individually and within the conservation area.

Socially the area is extremely diverse; many of the buildings on Whitworth Street which were originally office/warehouses for textile companies have been converted into apartments whilst the old offices for the Refuge Insurance Company are now a hotel. There are also purpose built offices within the Whitworth Street frontage constructed to a similar side and detail to the previous office/warehouse of the Victorian era. To the north of the Rochdale canal, the character of the area changes substantially, whilst many of the Victorian buildings remain. The area is more leisure orientated with bars, nightclubs and cafes having taken over the ground and first floors as the “gay village” has expanded from its original location on and around Canal Street to the north east of the site. Much of the nightlife in the area is now mainstream and brings many tourists to the area.

The economy of the local area is mixed, with leisure uses expanding around the site but also a perceived demand for characterful residential accommodation in the city centre. Office use seems to be moving further north in the city centre with Spinningfields having been extensively redeveloped with large footplate offices and also Peter Square with the new No.1 and No.2 office buildings.

The Atrium is now in need of refurbishment due to wear and tear and the internal fixtures and fittings becoming dated. Demand for short to mid-term let full size apartments is not as strong as it was due to the number of apartments to let that have been built or are under construction around the city centre. Demand, however, is rising for short term lets for smaller apartments for both tourist and business use. The new owner of the Atrium is therefore looking to refurbish the complex with smaller units suitable for shorter term lets. This is entirely compatible with the current use of the building and the economic and social context of the local area.



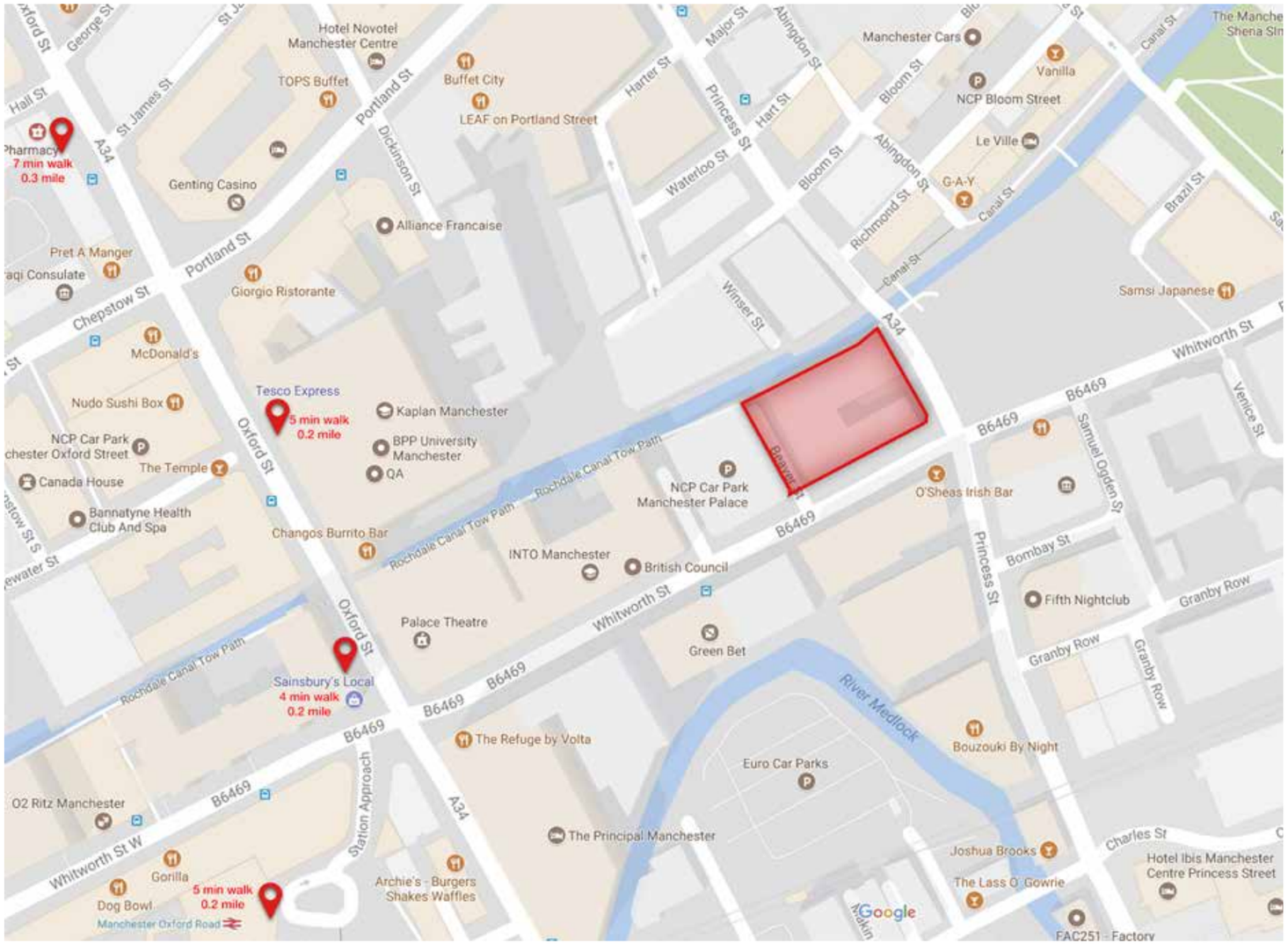






The brief from the client is to upgrade the building, creating more smaller apartments with public areas, ancillary hotel bar and coworking areas etc. compatible with this change and to provide A3 units that can be let to businesses that compliment this change.

2.0 Context



Local Amenities



Rochdale Canal Tow path

3.0 Proposed Use

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The proposed use is extremely similar to the existing use. The apartments are to be refurbished but the larger ones are to be sub-divided in order to provide additional apartments which are more suitable in size to the short term letting market. The principles adopted in the initial conversion to residential, maintaining new internal wall junctions to external walls away from the existing windows and the preservation of existing fabric will be maintained. The existing apartments had very little public area as they were seen as self-contained units, but for the smaller aparthotel units a larger common area with facilities such as a co-working area, a café and ancillary hotel bar and a gym in the basement are proposed.

The apartments are to be a new brand called “Locke” by SACO Property Group. SACO Property Group was established in 1997 and is one of the UK’s most established multi-model serviced apartment operators with an extensive network of properties around the world. SACO Property Group is fully owned and funded by Oaktree Capital. Currently some 800 serviced apartments are in operation in the UK with access to 35,000 serviced apartments globally.

SACO Property Group targets the corporate extended stay market via a traditional serviced apartment offering. This strategy involves securing the accounts of large corporate organisations, with current contracts including PWC, Deloitte, Shell and BMW.

In order to cater to the needs of the New Corporates, SACO Property Group has launched a new brand called “Locke” which is designed with the ideals of the new corporates in mind. The brand is more design led, offering good quality accommodation and value for money in the best locations. The aim is to provide an environment for guests which enables them to feel at home in the apartments while connecting them to the amenities of their location. In this context, the Locke apartments are often delivered alongside high quality food and beverage outlets within the same building which assist in enhancing the on-site customer experience whilst also providing the public with additional local amenities.

The Locke brand, in addition to providing state of the art short stay apartments, also provides a simple restaurant in the reception area where guests can meet and enjoy a meal or a drink and a co-working zone with meeting rooms. The co-working area will have Wi-Fi and allows users to work either individually or together and if privacy is required they can rent the individual meeting rooms being provided. A fully equipped gym is located in the basement for guests use where they can keep fit whilst away from home.



Proposed Public Area Ground Floor

A quote from Wallpaper magazine about the first Locke brand apartments Leman Locke

“With a blend of dusty pink upholstering, industrial furniture and sheepskin rugs, you might think the rooms at Leman Locke were the result of a domestic design commission – but you’d be wrong. Located a short stride from East London’s buzzing Brick Lane, the property is a new aparthotel concept that fuses the benefits of an Airbnb rental with the facilities of a boutique hotel.

‘This is the first time an Aparthotel is being presented with lifestyle experiences’ explains Stephen Hanton, CEO of SACO Property Group, the serviced apartments company behind Leman Locke. ‘We understand that travellers no longer want just a comfortable night’s stay. They want an experience and to feel a part of a community.’”

4.0 Proposed Amount

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As previously described, the proposals principally involve the creation of additional rooms by the sub-division of the larger existing rooms to increase room numbers. In addition, however, new apartments are being formed on the ground floor of Johnson House, which is currently a laundry and staffroom facing onto the canal. At basement level, new apartments are being formed on the same elevation in both Johnson and Central Houses, in areas previously used as a night club. The basement area of Central House abutting Princess Street is proposed to become a tenanted area; this space was previously used as a swimming pool probably for use as a bar. It is also proposed to extend the A3 retail unit currently in the basement of Dominion House, fronting Whitworth Street to the ground floor level, which is above pavement level on this elevation providing the ability to let this as one large or up to three smaller units.

The area below the existing glazed roof is, together with the Ground floor area toward Beaver Street to become a large open space to be used as reception, ancillary hotel bar and co-working area.

	Existing	Proposed	Existing (GIA)	Proposed (GIA)
Hotel Rooms	116	160	4947.8	5380.7
Hotel Floorspace	-	-	8154.7	7567.7
A3 Space	-	-	644.8	944.4
Nightclub Space	-	-	482.4	N/A

5.0 Proposed Layout

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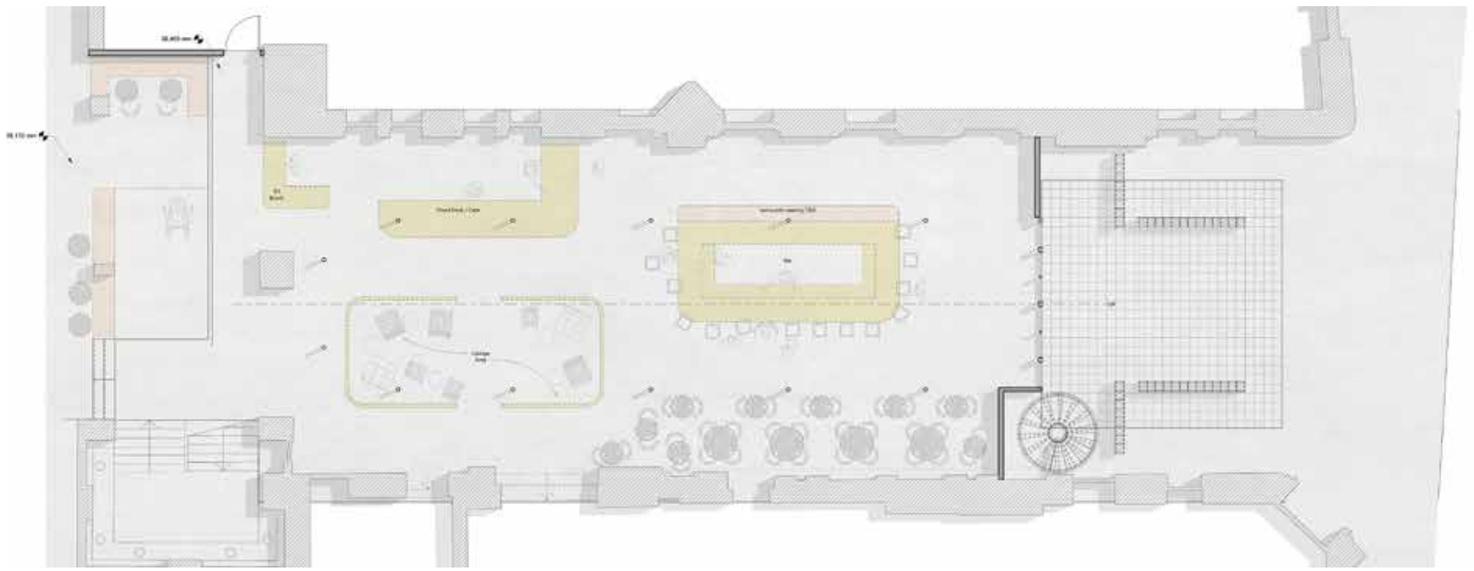
The layout of the apartments within the building is constrained by the existing building envelope and the layout of the existing apartments as the proposals envisage reconfiguring the current layout of the larger apartments to sub-divide them into smaller ones increasing the overall numbers. The ground floor and basement, however, have an increased scope for revising the existing layout as there is a need to provide more public spaces to service short stay apartments, which could be let for periods as short as a weekend, than long stay larger apartments. There is also scope to provide an alternative entrance to the building from Beaver Street as many guests using the apartments will use the MSCP whose pedestrian entrance/exit is located here.

Providing a new entrance on Beaver Street will have a number of advantages. In addition to allowing guests coming from the car park or from Oxford Road station along Whitworth Street to enter the building more conveniently, it will also provide some overlooking and passive surveillance of the street from the extended public area. As Beaver Street is also the entrance to the canal towpath, but the only buildings on this street are the car park and what was the service side of the apartments, this overlooking will be advantageous.

Providing the entrance to Beaver Street also allows the ground floor to be opened up, allowing views through the building to the Princess Street entrance, through the atrium space. New guestrooms will be provided at ground floor in Johnson House facing the canal whilst those in Central House will be maintained as the current layout but fully refurbished to meet the Locke brand requirements. The Whitworth Street frontage, in Dominion House, will be retail units at ground level, entered directly from the atrium space and at basement, which can be accessed by lift from the space providing two levels of retail space which can be sub-divided as necessary.

The atrium and extended public area in Johnson House, to the Beaver Street frontage, will be flexible, partly reception area with an ancillary hotel bar counter, partly lounge seating and a co-working area with tables chairs and Wi-Fi for working or meeting.

The remaining part of the basement area outside Dominion House is to become new guest apartments on the Rochdale Canal frontage with back of house uses in the deeper plan away from the glazed frontage.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan (see section 8.16 for detail)

The swimming pool area in Central House, with the connection to street level to become a retail tenanted area. To the rear in Johnson House and accessed by lift and stair from the atrium, will be the leisure area for the apartments with exercise machines and an open area for exercise classes or yoga.

We are aware that any work taking place in Central House will require Listed Building Consent.

5.0 Proposed Layout - **Precedent Imagery**

Public Areas

