Heritage Impact Statement

Development adjacent to Manchester Hall, 44-48 Bridge Street, Manchester



AHP Architectural History Practice

January 2017

Development adjacent to Manchester Hall,

44-48 Bridge Street, Manchester

Heritage Impact Assessment

prepared for

Vision Developments

by

The Architectural History Practice Limited

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Architectural History Practice Ltd (AHP) produced a heritage assessment and contextual design brief in 2013, to inform commercial development on the vacant site east of Manchester Hall on Bridge Street, for Vision Developments. Since then a scheme has been developed by AHR Architects Ltd, and pre-application discussions have been held with the City Council and Historic England. This report should be read in conjunction with the current AHR drawings, Design and Access Statement, Materials Review and supporting visuals.

Manchester Hall (formerly known as the Freemasons Hall) is Listed Grade II. The setting of this building comprises Bridge Street and Wood Street, and the public space to the north. The proposal site has been vacant since clearance in the mid 20th century, and is in use as a surface car park site. This site and Manchester Hall are within Deansgate Conservation Area. The current state of the site detracts from the setting of Manchester Hall and has a negative impact on the character of the conservation area.

1.2 The proposal

The proposal is for a 9-storey building comprising 7 floors of office space over ground floor retail and restaurant, with basement parking. The frontage to Bridge Street is 6-storey above ground level, with a set-back upper 2-storey section and plant level. The 5-bay front elevation will have an expressed concrete frame, with bronze fins to windows, faced in a pale high quality concrete.

1.3 Site location

The proposal site is a narrow rectangular plot that runs from Bridge Street through to Wood Street, immediately to the east of Manchester Hall. The address is 44-48 Bridge Street, Manchester, M3 3BT.

1.4 Author & Copyright

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2. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE

2.1 Introduction

The current character and appearance of these streets is the result of over 250 years of historic development. This part of Manchester developed in the 18th century, when the fields between the river and the line of Deansgate, an early north-south route, were gradually divided into plots for development. Wood Street was in existence by the mid-18th century and Bridge Street was laid out in the later 18th century, to serve a new bridge over the river Irwell, built in c1785. The development of these two streets and the plots that line them can be traced on historic mapping.

2.2 Bridge Street

Bridge Street was laid out in the second half of the 18th century; only the very east end of the street is shown on the 1746 Casson & Berry map of Manchester. It dates from c. 1785, when the first bridge over the Irwell was built, to connect Deansgate to the bridge (the bridge was replaced in 1844 by Albert Bridge). The line of the street, like most on this side of Deansgate reflects historic linear field boundaries and the pattern of previous land ownership. Bridge Street was gradually developed but none of the 18th century houses appear to have survived; the buildings along Bridge Street date from the late 19th century and later, most plots were redeveloped on more than one occasion.



Fig.1: The site in 1794, on Green's map [Greater Manchester Archives]

Green's map of 1794 shows the street partially developed with the proposal site still vacant, but by the 1840s, the street was densely developed with properties on both sides. Prior to site clearance in the mid-20th century, the site on the south side of Bridge Street was occupied by three early 19th century properties, numbers 44, 46 and 48.

The 1st edition OS map surveyed in 1849 shows Nos. 44-48 fronting the street immediately east of the Commercial Hotel, which then occupied the site later used for the Masonic Hall. Slater's Directory for 1849 lists the people that occupied the three frontage buildings – a coal merchant at No. 44, a milliners at No.46 and a pork butcher at No.48; the upper floors were probably residential with businesses on the ground floor. Behind the frontage properties there was a court in 1849, Bradley's Court, accessed by covered passages from Bridge Street and Wood Street, and filled with dense workers' housing including back-to backs.

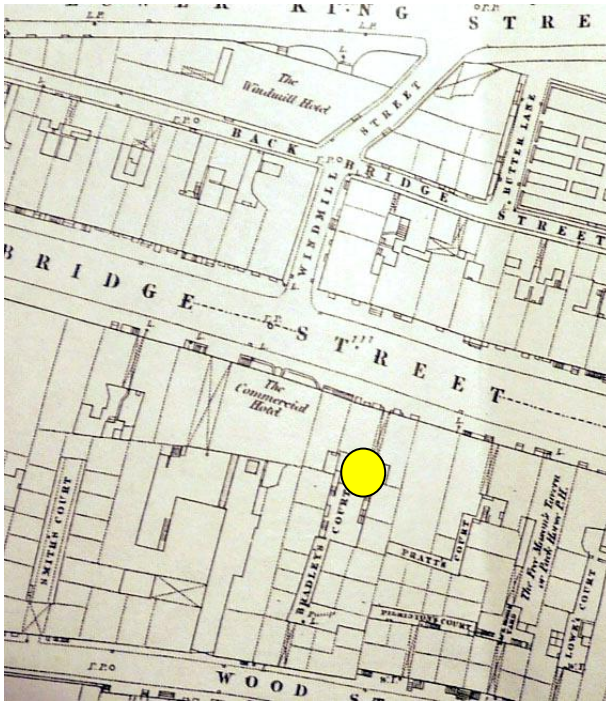

Fig.2: The site in 1849, east of the Commercial Hotel [Manchester Local Studies]

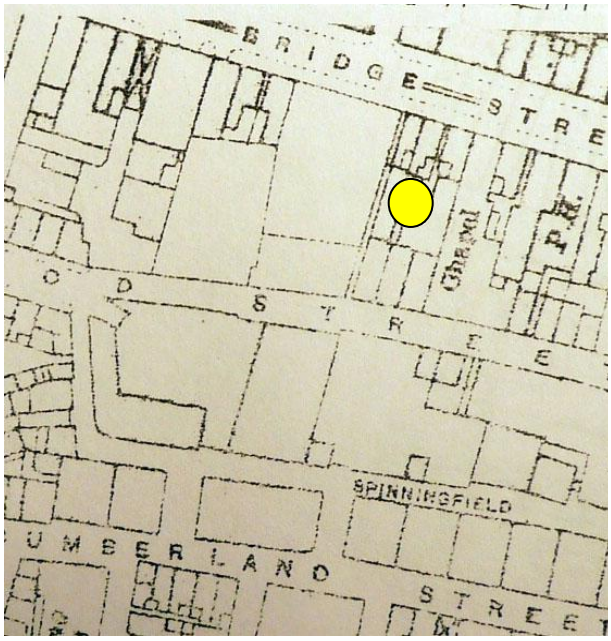

Fig.3: The site in 1922, after the court housing had been cleared [Manchester Local Studies]

Nos. 44-48 remained on the Site until they were demolished after 1956. By 1922, the adjacent site had been bought by the Freemasons, for a new Masonic Hall. The latter was not formally opened until 1929.

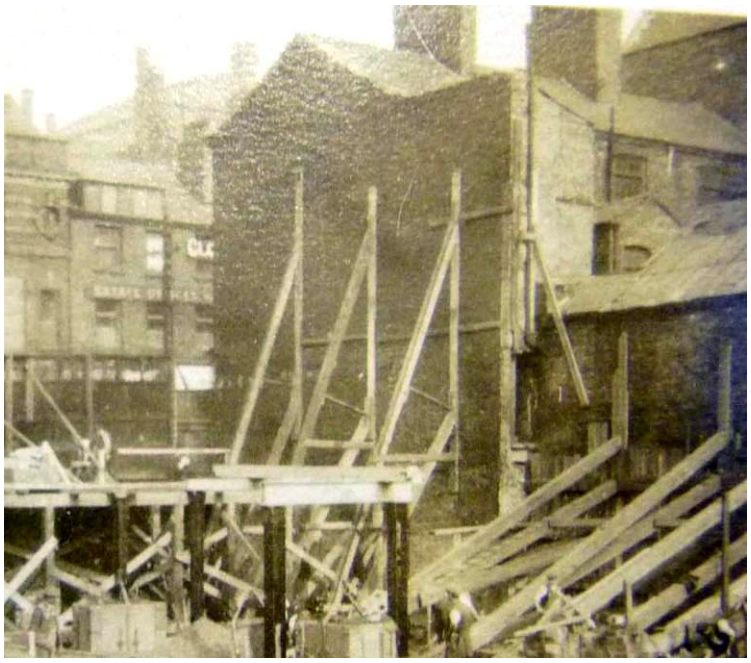

Fig.4: The site in c.1927, during the building of the Masonic Hall, from the SW [Freemasons' Collection]

The gable end of No. 44 was propped during construction of the Masonic Hall in the 1920s, as shown in contemporary photographs.

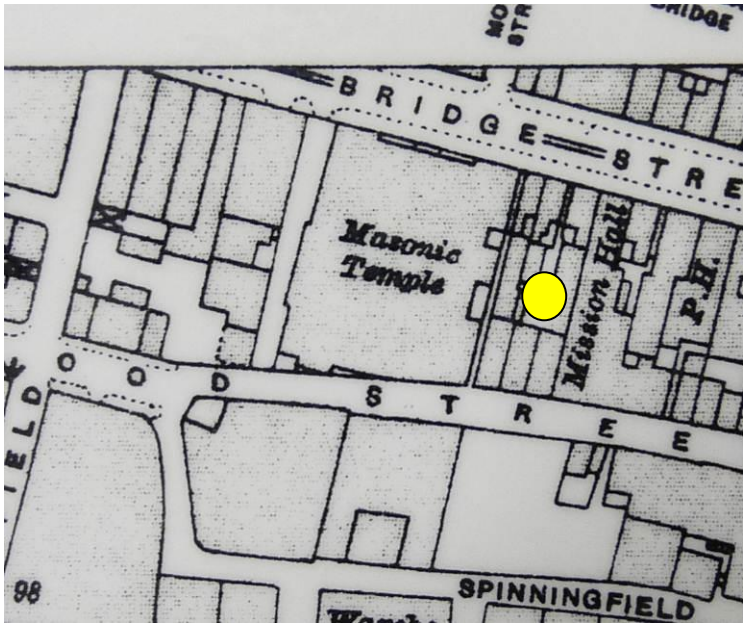

Fig.5: The site in 1932, after the Masonic Hall, had opened [Manchester Local Studies]

On historic photographs, the three properties fronting Bridge Street on the site appear as red brick 3-storey properties with sash windows to upper floors and ground floor shop fronts. The rear elevations are shown in Fig.4.

North of Bridge Street, buildings were cleared west of St Mary's Parsonage after WWII, and a public open space was created in the post-war era between King Street West and Bridge Street.

The Freemasons' use of the Masonic Hall was in decline by the late 20th by the early 21st century, the building was under-used and in need of refurbishment; space was let for meetings and other events. To secure the viability of the building, attract investment for much-needed refurbishment and make better use of its fine interior spaces, the Freemasons entered an agreement with Vision Developments for the property to be used as a conference and hospitality venue. The building was re-branded as Manchester Hall, with space reserved for the Freemasons' own use. Planning permission and LBC for change of use and associated alterations was granted in 2014 (ref.102327/FO/2013/C1 and 102328/FO/2013/C1).

2.3 Wood Street

Wood Street historically ran from Deansgate to the river; the east section of this narrow street was laid out as part of speculative development in the mid-18th century and is clearly shown on the 1746 Casson & Berry map, lined with houses at its east end. Between the 1746 map and the clearance of the site in c.1950, there were several phases of re-development. The original 18th century houses were replaced by back-to-backs and court housing for working people, probably in the early 19th century, as shown on the 1849 OS map. These were replaced with other buildings in the second half of the 19th century, which remained until the site was cleared in the mid-20th century.

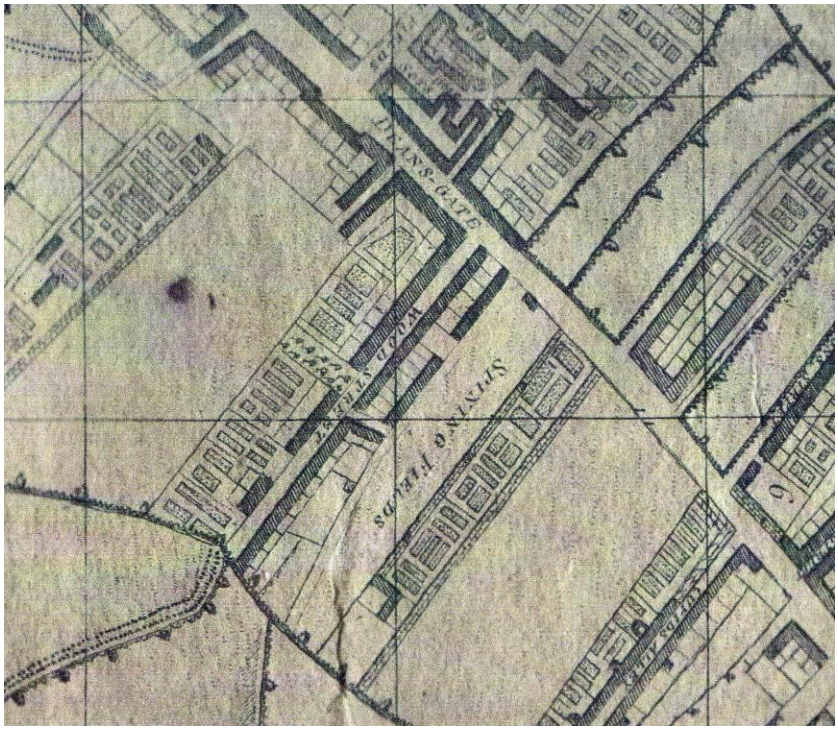

Fig.6: extract from the 1746 Casson & Berry map of Manchester, showing Wood Street partly developed [Greater Manchester Archives]

East of the site, the plot between Wood Street and Bridge Street was redeveloped in 1873 by the Manchester & Salford Street Children's Mission. The children's mission building was built in 1896 facing Bridge Street, with a Working Men's Church facing Wood Street added in 1905. The Wood Street Mission still runs from the premises. South-east of the site, Rylands Library was built in the 1890s, occupying a narrow plot fronting Deansgate and lining the south side of Wood Street. This was extended to the west, in phases from 1920 onwards.

Prior to clearance, the properties on the site facing Wood Street were two storeys high, a smaller scale than the Bridge Street frontage, but also red brick. The west end of the frontage is shown on a photo dated 1929 in the Freemasons Collection. This seems to have been in commercial use rather than residential.



Fig.7: Wood Street in c.1929, from the east [Freemasons Collection]

On the 1948 OS map the Wood Street properties are shown as Nos. 28 and 30 with a narrow gated passage between the site and the Masonic Hall (see Fig.7 and 8). Sometime between 1948 and 1956, the Wood Street part of the site was cleared; the Bridge Street properties remained until the 1960s (Fig.9).

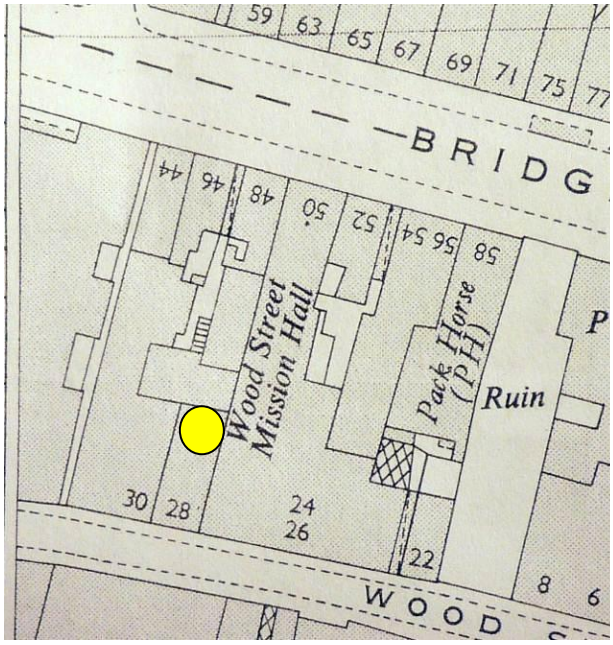

Fig.8: The site in c.1948 [Manchester Local Studies]

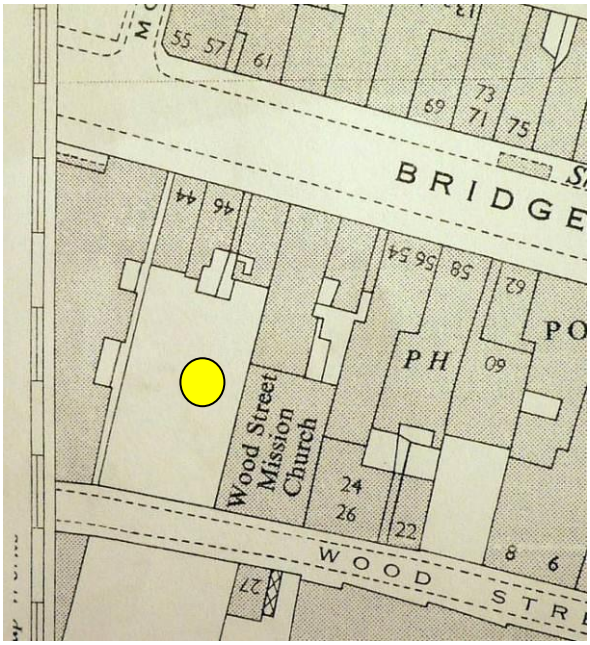

Fig.9: The site in 1956, partially cleared [Manchester Local Studies]

3. HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE & SETTING

3.1 Introduction

Understanding significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets, and is embedded within current government policy in the NPPF (CLG, *National Planning Policy Framework*, 2012). A key objective in the NPPF is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets…' (NPPF para.126). The NPPF advises that the more significant the heritage asset the greater weight should be given its conservation (policy 132). Historic England issued *Conservation Principles* in 2008 to explain the importance of understanding what is significant before making changes to a historic building. This document sets out four main aspects of significance: evidential (or archaeological), historical, aesthetic and communal.

Measuring significance is not an exact science; it relies on a combination of comparative analysis, an understanding of the building or site's historical development, the extent of alteration and change, and the setting. In this case, the significance of the site is closely related to the surrounding urban area.

3.2 The heritage significance of the site

The proposal site has high historical value, but its current vacant condition means that it has low aesthetic value. The site forms part of the setting of listed buildings particularly the adjoining Manchester Hall, but also of Rylands Library. In this section the contribution that the site makes to the setting of these two listed buildings will be discussed (3.2 and 3.3). Setting is defined as 'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced' (NPPF glossary). Setting can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset, have a neutral impact or detract from it. Other listed buildings in the vicinity include 31-33 King Street West, Grade II, which faces south into the open space north of Manchester Hall; due to the limited intervisibility between the listed building and the site, the latter plays a neutral role in its setting. The Sawyers Arms is a Grade II listed building on the west side of Deansgate; the site plays a neutral in its setting as part of the wider urban grid.

The site is within the Deansgate/Peter Street conservation area, designated in 1986, which covers part of the south side of Bridge Street. The north side of the street is within the Parsonage Gardens conservation area. The role of the proposal site in these conservation areas is discussed below (3.4 and 3.5).

3.3 Setting of Manchester Hall

Manchester Hall is a Grade II listed building, built in the late 1920s. Its principal frontage faces north onto Bridge Street where it is prominent in views from the

public open space between King Street West and Bridge Street. Bridge Street is the most important part of its setting. The south elevation is treated as a secondary elevation; faced in red brick and is largely blind, it fronts Wood Street, with returns in red brick onto the south sections of the east and west elevations. The service yard on the west side of Manchester Hall is accessed from Wood Street, with a former garage accessed by an arched entrance from Bridge Street. Wood Street and the service yard are of lower importance in the setting than Bridge Street to the north.

The vacant site east of Manchester Hall is in use as a surface car park, exposing part of the east elevation that was not intended to be visible, as this was built to abut the west end of No.44 Bridge Street, since demolished. The lower part of the east wall of the listed building is now rendered; the ghost of the missing building is visible on the wall, with Portland stone above (Fig.10). The south part of the east wall is faced in common bricks, which previously overlooked a narrow side alley. Manchester Hall's setting is harmed by the current vacant state of the site; the exposed east wall presents an ugly return elevation visible from Bridge Street. The current surface car park use of the site also has a negative impact on the setting of the heritage asset. The back of the pavement on Bridge Street is bounded by a 2 metre high concrete block wall, enclosing the north side of the car park.

The vacant site forms an unsightly gap in the urban form of Bridge Street, disrupting the continuous 'street wall' that existed at the time the Masonic Hall was built.



Fig. 10: east elevation of the Freemasons Hall, from Bridge Street

3.4 The Setting of Rylands Library

Rylands Library is a Grade I listed building, built in the 1890s to house an important book collection and as a memorial to the cotton magnate John Rylands. Designed by architect Sir Basil Champneys, the gothic revival building has a dense urban setting, defined by Deansgate to the east, Wood Street to the north and a modern public open space to the south. At the time of construction, there were no spaces around the Library apart from the streets, and its architectural emphasis was focused on the Deansgate frontage. The creation of a larger public space to the south of the Rylands (Spinningfields) has enabled its south, side elevation to be appreciated and has enhanced its setting (Fig.13 and 14), although this was not part of the townscape in the 1890s.

The library was extended to the west along Wood Street in phases during the first half of the 20th century; this part of the building has less significance than the primary phase Wood Street provides part of the setting for the side of the Library, which is seen at close quarters from the narrow street. However, this part of the setting makes a less important contribution to the setting than Deansgate and Spinningfields, which enable fine views of the architecture. The service yard and rear elevations to Rylands adjoin the service entrance to the Magistrate's Court; this poor quality aspect of its setting detracts from the significance of Rylands, but is not visible from the principal frontages (Fig. 12).

The proposal site forms part of the setting of the rear of Rylands Library on Wood Street, where it has a negative impact on the streetscene and the setting of the Grade I listed Building. This is due to the break in the street wall, the surface car park use and the unsightly views of side elevations of flanking buildings that were not designed to be visible from the public realm (Fig.11).



Fig.11: The Freemasons and the site to LH with the rear of Rylands to the RH



Fig.12: the rear of the Rylands Library – earlier phases to LH and mid-C20 block to RH.



Fig.13: the S side of the Rylands Library from Deansgate

3.5. Deansgate conservation area - character

Bridge Street marks the boundary of two adjoining conservation areas; Deansgate conservation area to the south and Parsonage Gardens to the north. The Deansgate conservation area boundary includes the proposal site and Manchester Hall, but not the properties further west.

The proposal site lies in a grid of streets, laid out on mostly flat land that gently slopes to the west towards the river Irwell. There is an established hierarchy in the street pattern with Deansgate the principal street, followed by Bridge Street, an important route leading to a bridge across the river. Wood Street at the lower end of the hierarchy functions as a service street. This historic street hierarchy is expressed in the varying width of the streets and the function, scale and architectural treatment of buildings fronting the streets. Spinningfields, historically a narrow service street, has risen in importance since the area was regenerated and now takes the form of a large public open space instead of a narrow side street. The urban grid south of Wood Street was remodelled in the late 20th century and historic routes to the river blocked by the courts complex.

The streets are densely developed and characterised by buildings that fill their plots, with frontages built up to the back of the pavement. This reflects the historic high land values and demand for plots in the city centre. The generally narrow frontages express early plot sizes recorded on historic maps. The historic character of the streets depends on an eclectic range of styles and materials used to face buildings of varying scale and date range. Variety, rather than consistency or unity gives the streets their character (Fig.14). Building uses are commercial with mostly shops to ground floors, and offices on upper floors.

The buildings east of the site on Bridge Street and Wood Street make a positive contribution to both the conservation areas, although none are listed. Most of these buildings were re-built in the 1890s or early 20th century, faced in a wide variety of materials including red brick, terracotta, sandstone, faience and cement render. Architectural styles of the late 19th and early 20th century buildings are generally 'revival' styles that use features and motifs from earlier historic styles such as Gothic, Renaissance or Classical. This results in frontages that are generally richly modelled with traditional details, mouldings and vertically-proportioned fenestration. Some of these characteristics are present in Manchester Hall which is a restrained classical design, with a symmetrical front elevation faced in Portland limestone but with plain red brick to the rear. The scale of the buildings along Bridge Street and Wood varies from 3 to 5 storeys although there are much taller buildings within parts of the Deansgate conservation area, including 14-storey Sunlight House on Quay Street and the recent RBS banking offices on Deansgate/Spinningfields.



Fig.14: South side of Bridge Street east of the site, 1890s Children's Mission to RH

3.6. Deansgate conservation area – role of proposal site

The proposal site has been vacant since the 1960s. The lack of built development on the site disrupts the urban grain and street form in this part of the conservation area and has a negative effect on the historic character and integrity of this part of both conservation areas, on Bridge Street and Wood Street. The vacant site allows views between Bridge Street and Wood Street exposing the rear service elevation of the Magistrates' Court to views from Bridge Street (see Fig.10). On Wood Street, the site presents an ugly gap in the street wall, where the surface car park is bounded by steel railings.

The vacant state of the site also impacts negatively on the setting of unlisted heritage assets in the conservation area, particularly the 1890s Mission building to the east, now with a rendered finish to the exposed side elevation (Fig.15). The 1896 Children's Mission on Bridge Street is an attractive 4-storey gabled building faced in buff terracotta. To its south side, the 1905 Wood Street Mission building has a 3-storey gabled elevation, faced in red brick with stone details.



Fig.15: The proposal site and the Wood Street Mission, from Wood Street

3.7. Wider townscape setting of proposal site

In townscape terms, the 4-storey Manchester Hall marks the transition between 3-4 storey historic buildings on narrow plots to the east in the conservation areas, and much taller, more recent buildings with larger floor plates to the west. The latter all date from the second half of the 20th century or the 21st century. The confident modern architecture of Spinningfields and the west end of Bridge Street is expressed by a cluster of tall buildings. The earliest of these are the Tax Office (1958) north-west of Manchester Hall which is 17 storeys, and Manchester House (1965) immediately to the west, 11 storeys. The ground floor of the latter has recently been remodelled to create retail development with pedestrian access into Spinningfields, called The Avenue North. The entrance into this from Bridge Street is directly next to the mid-20th century garage at Manchester Hall. Further west the Civil Justice Centre is 17 storeys high.

On the south side of Wood Street, the rear of the Magistrates' Court is the dominant feature, with a street level service entrance, underground ramped entrance and rear elevations faced in smooth red sandstone and glazed panels (Fig.16). The functional appearance of this elevation corresponds to the plain treatment of the rear of Manchester Hall. Due to the current vacant status of the site, there are views of the Courts service area from Bridge Street, a view that should be obscured in urban design terms.



Figs 16: Magistrates Courts, service elevation onto Wood Street

North of the proposal site, the public space created in the mid 20th century south of King Street West is lined on the east and north sides with 3-storey late 19th century and early 20th century buildings, of varied styles and materials. The space provides the setting for the frontage of Manchester Hall, which visually encloses the south side of the space. The west side of the space is poorly defined due to the angled position of the Tax Office which was sited at an angle to the grid street pattern, leaving space for a car park along the street edge of this large site.



Fig.17: Tax Office at north-west end of Bridge Street, built 1958

3.8. Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this site is considered to be medium, as although the site was previously occupied by the terraces of 18th century houses and gardens shown on historic mapping, the cellars of 19th century buildings are likely to have disturbed or destroyed earlier deposits. Further advice should be taken on the potential for earlier archaeology on this site, from the Greater Manchester Archaeological Service.

3.9. Contextual design brief

Sections 3.2 to 3.5 above describe the context and townscape setting of the proposal site. This was used to provide design principles for new development on the vacant site, in the form of a short contextual design brief taking account of the character of the area and the settings of listed buildings. This was produced by AHP in 2013 and circulated to the design team:

1. Reinstating the historic building line along Bridge Street and Wood Street will repair the urban form, provide coherence to the streetscape and enhance the conservation areas. Alignment of the front and rear elevations of the building should be to the back of the pavements.

2. New development should remain within the site footprint.

3. New development should respect and relate positively to the height of the adjacent buildings, especially the adjacent Grade II Manchester Hall, the Grade I Rylands Library and the streetscape of Bridge Street to the east of the site. There is scope for a building that is taller than the Freemasons, but its overall height and scale should not dominate either this building or the Rylands Library.

4. The new development should provide active frontages at street level enlivening the public realm and create interest along Bridge Street.

5. Servicing from Wood Street would be consistent with adjoining buildings.

6. The new development should take account of the following:

    - Balance between vertical and horizontal proportion.

    - Differentiate between the ground floor, middle and top of the building in order to provide a coherent, legible building.

    - Vertically proportioned windows will be consistent with adjoining historic architecture, but a contemporary approach to fenestration could be taken.

- Well-articulated, legible entrances are important for the ground floor;
- Detailed design and materials: the design, fenestration, finishes and materials should be in harmony with the existing architectural character of the area, and avoid visual conflicts.
- The development should not dominate designated heritage assets in the area, particularly the Grade I listed Rylands Library and the Grade II Manchester Hall. To achieve this, a new building should be no more than seven storeys high (ground plus six).
- The aim should be to create high quality contemporary architecture for the site, and pastiche architecture should be avoided;
- As materials in the locality are varied, there is a wide choice of potential materials and finishes. Natural facing materials such as stone would be consistent with adjoining historic buildings, but other good quality traditional or new materials could be considered. The colour of proposed materials should avoid conflict with other nearby buildings.
- The design should take account of the urban design context of Bridge Street and Wood Street, in order to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area and the settings of listed buildings. This can include reference to 20th century architecture west and south of Manchester Hall, outside the conservation areas.
- The aim should be to create a building that responds to the varied architecture of the locality and is distinctive to this part of Manchester.
- Building services and signage should be integrated into the overall design so that locations and design parameters for these functional elements are taken into account at an early stage and not added as an after-thought.

7. The guidance also recommended that the new building be illustrated in key views of the site, such as views:

    - From the west side of Deansgate along Spinningfields, just south of Rylands Library;
    - From St Mary's Parsonage, just south of the junction with King Street West;
    - From the west side of Deansgate, looking west along Bridge Street;
    - From Wood Street, looking east from the rear of the Freemasons' Hall
    - From the north side of Bridge Street, looking south east from just west of the Tax Office

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1. Introduction & Policy

In determining applications affecting listed buildings and their settings, local authorities have to take account of section 66 (1) in the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act: 'the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest…'. Section 69 in the same Act relates to development in conservation areas, where local authorities have a duty to 'preserve and enhance' the character of a conservation area. These duties rely on understanding why a building or conservation area is special and how proposals will affect this. Policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reinforce the 1990 Planning Act, referring to listed buildings and conservation areas as heritage assets, protected for their significance.

The NPPF emphasises a sustainable approach to development for social, economic and environmental factors. In relation to new development, the NPPF expects local authorities to take account of 'the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness' (para 131.). When assessing the impact of a proposal on heritage asset, 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be'. Significance can be harmed by alteration or destruction or by development within the setting (para 132).

The NPPF states that local authorities 'should look for opportunities for new development with Conservation Areas ….and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance' (para 137).

Historic England has published guidance on assessing the impact of development on setting, *The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3* (March 2015). This recommends that development is considered under key headings: Location and Siting; Form and Appearance; Other Effects; these headings are used in the assessment below.

4.2. Summary of the proposals

AHR Architecture has produced proposal drawings for a new building to fill the existing gap site. The narrow rectangular site is aligned north-south with frontages to Bridge Street and Wood Street. The design has been informed by the site's planning history, the 2013 AHP contextual design guide and pre-application discussions. This report should be read in conjunction with the current set of proposal plans and supporting documents by AHR Architecture, including CGI visuals and a Materials Review**.**

he proposal is for a 9-storey building comprising 7 floors of office space over ground floor retail and restaurant, with basement parking. The front elevation onto Bridge Street is six storeys high, with the 8-storey south element set back. There is a plant area on the roof of the 8-storey element. The principal access will be from Bridge Street with service access from Wood Street.

The building has been designed in a crisp, contemporary style to avoid any comparison or competition with the adjoining listed Manchester Hall, and to contrast in a restrained manner to buildings on Wood Street and Bridge Street. The building has an expressed concrete frame divided into 5 bays across the Bridge Street elevation above the ground floor 2-bay shop fronts. Bronze fins frame window openings, with a high proportion of glazing to solid wall. A pale coloured concrete has been chosen for the panels to complement Manchester Hall's Portland limestone frontage. The flat roof is not visible from street level, with a glazed balustrade proposed for the Bridge Street roof-line and terrace. The two upper floors are fully glazed, to contrast with the principal 6-storey elevations.

4.3. Impact on the setting of Manchester Hall

Location & Siting

The siting of the proposal within a cleared gap site on the south side of Bridge Street is positive. The new building will directly abut adjoining buildings to infill the gap. and adjoin the back of the pavement on Bridge and Wood Street, following the dense pattern of development in this grid of streets. The proposal will reinstate the street wall that existed when Manchester Hall was first built.

The siting of the development will have a positive impact on the setting of Manchester Hall, by obscuring the lower elevation exposed by site clearance. By abutting the boundary between the site and Manchester Hall, the new building will obscure the few high level windows on the east elevation and effect two light wells facing east. As the proposed development is taller than buildings that were on the site in the 1920s, and will fully occupy the whole site, it will reduce internal light levels within some parts of the listed building. However, these are mostly secondary areas of lower significance and the principal rooms will not be affected.

Form and appearance

The impact of the 8-storey building on the setting of Manchester Hall is managed by stepping back the two upper storeys from the building line. The 6-storey 5-bay front element is at approximately the same height as the upper, set-back element of Manchester Hall, but 2 storeys above the flanking frontage blocks of Manchester Hall. The proposed 6-storey elevation is in the form of a grid with an exposed pale

concrete frame, bronze window fins and narrow panels of Portland stone colour. The higher upper two storeys are fully glazed within a structural frame and set well back from the building line and behind the line of the central elevation of Manchester Hall. In keys views from the north, the stepped profile will reduce the visual impact of the upper storeys on the architectural presence and setting of the 1920s listed building. On Wood Street, the 6-storey element built up to the building line will rise about one full storey above the rear of Manchester House, with the set-back upper storeys visible in long views along the street. Due to the relatively low significance of the rear elevation of the listed building and the lower quality of this part of the setting, this impact is acceptable.

The pale colour of the concrete panels will complement and not conflict with the north front of Manchester Hall; the pale colour will avoid the north elevation of the building having a heavy or dominating visual impact on the street scene. To the south, the pale concrete will have a neutral visual impact next to the red brick of the listed building's rear elevation.

Other Effects

The use of the ground floor for restaurant/retail use will enliven this part of the Bridge Street frontage, increase footfall and complement the conference and hospitality functions of Manchester Hall. Servicing of the new building will be from Wood Street which is consistent with the use of this secondary street for service functions. Manchester Hall is also serviced from Wood Street.

In overall terms, it is considered that the development will not cause harm to the setting of the Masonic Hall.

4.4. Impact on the setting of the Rylands Library

Location & Siting

The currently vacant site has a negative impact on Wood Street which forms part of the setting of the rear of the Rylands Library. Infilling the site for commercial development will enable the reinstatement of the street wall on Wood Street, a positive benefit. The proposal site is north-west of the rear extensions of Rylands Library, diagonally opposite the library's service bay; this part of the Rylands Library setting is low quality, compared to the more important setting to the east and south.

Form and appearance

On Wood Street, the building will be 8-storey above ground, with the two upper storey elements set back slightly. In long views along the street, the full height of the proposal will be apparent, including in views west from Deansgate adjoining the front elevation of Rylands Library. However, due to the secondary status of Wood Street in the setting of Rylands Library, and the varied scale and forms of buildings

along this narrow street, including taller buildings further west, the 8-storey building will not have a harmful effect and its overall visual impact is considered acceptable. The choice of pale facing materials will ensure that the proposal does not compete with Rylands Library which is faced in a distinctive red sandstone.

Other Effects

The siting of the proposal north-west of the rear of the Rylands Library ensures that the newbuilding will not cast shadows over important elements of the listed building. Servicing to the rear from Wood Street is consistent with servicing of adjoining sites including Rylands Library.

4.5. Impact on the Conservation Areas

Location & Siting

The current vacant site has a negative impact on the conservation areas as the gap site disrupts the urban grain in the streetscene; there is a substantial benefit in urban design terms of reinstating the street wall on both Bridge Street and Wood Street. Development that fills the site, up to back of pavement on both streets will reinstate the urban grain and the building line, enhancing the built environment in both conservation areas.

Form and appearance

The proposed commercial building is eight storeys above ground plus a roof-top plant area; on Bridge Street the upper two storeys and plant area are set well back, so that the street frontage will appear to be 6-storey. This works well with the scale of Manchester Hall to the west, but is approximately 2 storeys above the adjoining Mission building on Bridge Street and other unlisted buildings further east and to the north. In conservation area terms, this will cause slight harm to the streetscene, visually, partly as the scale and proportions of the elevational grid of the proposal is also larger than on traditional buildings on the street, a result of modern office space and servicing standards. The impact of the scale of the proposal is outweighed by the benefit of the reinstating the street wall by infilling this gap site.

On Wood Street, the upper storey elements are set back slightly; in long views along the street, the upper storeys will be visible. However, the lower position of Wood Street in the conservation area hierarchy compared to Bridge Street, and the narrowness of the street which limits views, make this scale acceptable. The proposal will also compare well with recent architecture on this street including the Magistrates' Court.

The choice of facing materials is considered to be appropriate on streets where there is a wide range of facing materials and colours, with pale Portland stone and red brick used for Manchester Hall and red brick, terracotta and other materials used for adjoining unlisted buildings.

Other Effects

The new building will be serviced from Wood Street, with access to the basement car park and cycle area, consistent with this street's secondary service function. The existing site is used as a car park; traffic levels in the conservation area are unlikely to be increased by the proposal. The stepped profiled of the north side of the proposal will limit the shadowing effect of the new building on the open space to the north of Bridge Street.

The use of the ground floor for restaurant/retail use will enliven Bridge Street, contributing to the vitality of the streetscene.

5. CONCLUSION

New development on the site east of the Manchester Hall provides an opportunity to reinstate the street wall on the south side of Bridge Street, and reinstate the dense urban fabric of this city centre block. The development will affect two conservation areas, Deansgate and Parsonage Gardens, and will have an impact on the settings of other heritage assets, particularly two listed building, Manchester Hall and Rylands Library.

The proposal for a new building to fill the gap site has been designed by AHR Architects, following an appraisal of the site by AHP in 2013. Pre-application discussions with the local planning authority and Historic England have also informed the current submission, which is accompanied by a materials review and visual impact assessment to illustrate how the proposed building will fit into the setting of the Manchester Hall, the Rylands Library and the city street scene.

The proposed scheme for 7 floors of offices above ground floor retail/restaurant has been designed to reduce impact on heritage assets and settings by stepping back the top floors and plant areas. The building will be taller than adjoining buildings by two or more storeys, but it is considered that the varied character and scale within the two conservation areas and wider townscape can accommodate this. Developing the vacant site will reinstate the urban grain and building line on two streets, a positive impact on the conservation areas; the proposal will enhance the townscape.

The impact on Rylands Library is considered to be neutral; the site is diagonally opposite the rear of the Grade I listed building, on a secondary street used for servicing. The rear area of Rylands Library in close proximity to the site has lower significance than the principal elements of the listed building, which will not be affected by the development. The choice of pale colours and crisp contemporary architecture will not compete with Rylands Library.

The proposal will have some impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Manchester Hall; the east elevation of the listed building will be obscured by the new building, affecting a few high level windows and two light wells, although these mostly serve less significant rooms. The new building will be taller than Manchester Hall by 2 storeys, although the massing of the proposal has been designed to reduce the harmful effect of greater scale. The use of a pale Portland stone colour for the concrete frame and facing panels harmonises with the front of Manchester Hall and is an appropriate choice.

The slight harm caused by the development to the setting of Manchester Hall is outweighed by the benefits of infilling a long-vacant gap site to reinstate the urban grain, and the contribution the development will make to social and economic factors.

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