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8th February 2008

Mr D Roscoe
City Centre Team
Planning
Town Hall Extension
PO Box 463
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Our ref: MAGM1019

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Dear Mr Roscoe

TOOTAL HOUSE, SPRING GARDENS, MANCHESTER – ELEVATIONAL ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING BUILDING

Further to recent discussions, please find enclosed an application for elevational alterations to the ground floor of Tootal House, Spring Gardens.

In addition to this letter, the application is accompanied by four hard copies plus a digital version of the following:

- Site edged red at 1:1250
- Application forms & certificates
- Design & Access Statement
- Existing elevations at 1:50
- Proposed elevations at 1:50
- Sections through curtain walling at 1:50
- Sections through proposed new entrance at 1:50
- Materials samples of the proposed glazing, and proposed slate floor surface to the Spring Gardens entrance.

An application fee cheque for £135 is also enclosed.

Background

Tootal House is located within the King Street Conservation Area and is immediately adjacent to the Grade II listed Athaeneum building. The building was constructed in the 1980s and now has a dated appearance. This is made all the more incongruous as a result of the significant levels of redevelopment and public realm improvements that have taken place along Spring Gardens over the last two years. The building owners, Magnus Ltd, are keen to ensure that the building remains attractive to future occupiers in order to guarantee its long term viability at the heart of Manchester's financial core. In order to do this it is proposed to make the street frontage more active and attractive, and ensure that the commercial space above supplies standard A Grade office facilities.

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At present, the building displays little active frontage to the ground floor, with pedestrian points being located beneath heavy marble canopies at the corner of Spring Gardens and Marble Street, and on Spring Gardens immediately adjacent to The Athaeneum. The glazing currently used at ground and first floor is a semi-transparent, brown-tinted glazing system which does not allow for glimpses into the building and instead gives the building a heavy and foreboding appearance from street level.

Several of the buildings along Spring Gardens now have active ground floor uses which better integrate the buildings with the street and assist in creating a more natural linkage to the main retail core. The proposals contained within this application will contribute to this on-going improvement of the area and may facilitate a change of use at ground and first floor level which will bring additional activity to this area of the city centre.

The Proposals

The proposals are discussed in detail in the accompanying Design and Access Statement. In brief, the elevational alterations will consist of:

- A new curtain walling glazing system to be installed in existing window openings along Spring Gardens, Marble Street and Milk Street
- The removal of the existing marble canopies above the pedestrian entrance points
- The upgrading of the Spring Gardens entrance point to facilitate disabled access
- The installation of a glass clad feature entrance at the Spring Gardens entrance.

Policy Compliance

Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester

The site lies within Area 7 (The Financial Core) of the City Centre Small Area Proposals. Improvements to the environment and better management of the space between buildings will be encouraged. The policy also states that, where opportunities arise, a more lively and interesting street scene will be sought e.g. by the sensitive design of building frontages.

Under policy DC18 of the UDP (Conservation Areas), careful consideration needs to be given to:

- The relationship of new structures to neighboring buildings and spaces
- The effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings

Under DC19 (Listed buildings), it is stated that the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity.

The proposals will serve to increase interest at street level, compliant with the Small Area Proposals. The impact on the conservation Area and listed buildings is considered in detail below.

Guide to Development in Manchester SPD

The SPD encourages design which reflects the character and context of its surroundings to create a sense of place. Developments in Conservation Areas will only be acceptable where they preserve or enhance their special nature. Buildings should relate well to each other. Development should enhance exiting vistas, and strong corners are important.

The Guide states that for the economic prosperity of the City to be sustainable, it is important to accommodate the requirements of business, investors, visitors and residents. Buildings should cater for the requirements of their users whilst contributing to the character and atmosphere of the Centre. The relationship between new and existing buildings, particularly those with an historic role, will be important.

The proposals clearly comply with these policies and will continue the enhancement of this area of the city centre.

A Strategy for Manchester City Centre 2008-2012

The draft strategy sets out one of the objectives for the Central Business District area as being the improvement of the streetscape and the introduction of more vibrant ground floor uses, with improved linkages to the retail core being of high importance.

Impact on the Conservation Area and Listed Building

The proposed elevational alterations will assist in enhancing the visual appearance of this part of the King Street Conservation Area by replacing the currently inactive and dated ground floor of the building with a lighter and more visually permeable intervention. The proposals are therefore compliant with policy DC18.

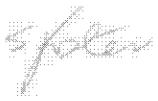
In terms of the impact on the neighbouring Athaeneum, the proposed new entrance will remove the existing heavy canopy which currently projects forward of Tootal House in close proximity to the Spring Gardens elevation of the listed Athaeneum. By removing the canopy and replacing it with a lighter glass entrance feature, views towards the listed building are enhanced, thereby improving the setting of the listed building, compliant with policy DC19 of the UDP.

Conclusion

The proposed elevational changes to Tootal House are compliant with the policy objectives for this area of the city centre. The alterations will improve the pedestrian environment around the building and will thereby have a positive impact upon the Conservation Area. The proposed upgrading to the entrance on Spring Gardens, adjacent to The Athaeneum, will not be as visually intrusive as the existing marble canopy in this location, thereby improving the setting of the listed building. The revised entrance arrangement will also allow for full disabled access.

I trust that you have sufficient information to validate this application and look forward to hearing from you to that effect.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Foster
Senior Planner

Enc.

cc. Mr S Widdowson
Mr A Brooks

Magnus
APE