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Renovation of 63/65 Thomas Street, Northern Quarter, Manchester

Design and access statement

in support of planning application



Prepared for:

Stevens Scanlan

By:

Reid
Architects
Fairbairn
72 Sackville Street
Manchester
M1 3NJ
0161 234 0991

3.0 Design Concept

The idea of the refurbishment is based around a rationalisation of the core and maintaining the existing features of the building – particularly at roof level.

Plan Form

The plan form fills the site of the urban block and is raised up from here. The existing core enters from Oak Street which provides a split to the ground floor. By rotating the entrance to Thomas Street, we can provide a clear frontage to Oak Street for the retail unit. The opportunity is then for the office entrance to be located on Thomas Street. Rotating the stair also allows us to put a lift in the building and centralise the circulation core for the building, creating efficient office space split by the core.

On the upper floors a mezzanine level which is inserted within the existing trusses creates further space for the top floor.

Section

The building in section will maintain its floor levels as existing with the exception of the roof. To bring light into the heart of the building a roof light will be inserted. To the top floors there is height to install a mezzanine, with modification to the existing trusses. To further enable this space to be used, a dormer will be included which will bring light into this space and make it usable.

Massing

The massing of the building stays as original with the exception of the dormer at roof level. The dormer is set back at roof level and is a natural addition to the building form and architecture of the area. This is a subtle addition which compliments the exiting building massing.

Materials

Materials that are chosen will contribute to and where possible enhance the character of the area.

To ground floor for the retail units it is proposed to use stone to clad the building to cover up the damaged brickwork. This will replace the existing damaged brickwork. The entrance to the offices will have a stone feature and glass door to give a visual connection to the new reception space. The existing brickwork and stonework to the upper floors will be cleaned and re-pointed. Windows will be replaced in timber to match the windows and fenestration patterns as existing. The roof section will reuse the slate where possible, with new zinc and glass dormer addition. Any plant will be screened with aluminium louvres to match the colour of the slate.

Car Parking

There is no requirement for car parking.

Scale

The building matches the scale of the existing surrounding context with the new dormer window in proportion to the building.

Secure by Design

The scheme will seek to approve secure by design accreditation.

Lighting Scheme

A high quality lighting scheme will be designed to light the building sensitively without light pollution.

Interiors

Where possible the existing fabric of the building will be revealed, especially at roof level where the mezzanine will nestle between the existing trussed rafters.

The receptions will have new stone and timber feature walling and a glass and steel staircase.

The cores will be exposed brickwork, with the exterior walls lined in plasterboard to comply with building regulations.

Services Strategy

The building will be air conditioned using VRV units which will be concealed within the ceiling rafts.

The plant will be located on roof level and will not visible from Oak Street and will only be partially visible on the approach from Carpenters Lane as it will be masked by the existing chimney stack. Power and Data will be within the flooring.

Part M Access

The building will provide level access to the offices with a ramped section at the doorways. There will be a new lift inserted which will serve each floor including basement. The staircase that will access the mezzanine level will be fully ambulant disabled.

The overall perception of the refurbished space will be clear and contemporary to match that of the surrounding refurbished buildings within the area. The reuse of such buildings is not only successful within an environmental context but also within an urban context as such buildings are part of the areas history and such renovation projects only add to the areas character.

In access design terms the new façade treatment will be an improvement to the existing condition and will be designed in accordance with the current Part M of the building regulations.

Relationship with PPG 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment

In relation to the scheme, the key issues of the PPG are:

"Promoting sustainable economic growth offering economic prosperity and inward investment" *(paragraph 1.2 and 1.5)*

The building is in a state of disuse and has been for some time. The proposed refurbishments are integral to ensure that new tenants can be found and the building can provide suitable accommodation for small thriving businesses which are an integral part of both the Northern Quarter's economy and character.

Further to its disrepair the building has suffered fire damage. The fabric of the building requires extensive work to bring it back into use and make it attractive to prospective tenants. At current returns in the market, it is unlikely that a private investor would undertake this project as there would be no return on the project. To enable the building to be invested in and provide more floor space the introduction of the mezzanine level at the roof space of the third floor is critical to economic model of the building.

The investment will also bring the building back to the quality deserving of the Conservation Area and will enhance the area.

Through the refurbishment new business will be attracted and the client already has a pre let for the building therefore can progress the project with confidence.

The reuse of the building will not be possible unless the building's owners are able to progress with substantial internal renovations – including the introduction of a new lift and stair core thereby greatly improving accessibility to the existing first and second office space – and external works such as ramped sections at doorways to increase accessibility at ground.

"Consider the impact of the new development proposals on the historic environment"
(Paragraph 1.3)

The context of the development is a mix of small scale buildings which make up the grain of the Northern Quarter and to the front of the building a multi storey car park which detracts from the area. The building is connected to a two storey building along Thomas Street. The buildings opposite are 2-3 storeys with pitched roofs.

Due to the narrow streets of the northern quarter and the slope of the roof to the building the buildings roof is not visually prominent. There is a large existing parapet which shields the roof from site and when standing at street level the roof and the extension are not visible from Thomas Street or Oak Street.

The massing and form of the rooftop alterations are in keeping with the fabric and forms of the Conservation Area. The dormer is a long thin element which is kept low and clad in zinc material to help blend and marry it into the roofline. The form is modern, but this gives an impression of economic growth expansion and compliments and enhances the building and the Conservation Area.

The proposed external and internal works take into account the nature and character of the area and as such provide a subtle enhancement to the area. This is particularly true with regard to the choice of materials and working within the existing fabric of the building.

The current external condition of the building has not been maintained over the years and as such will require substantial repair works. The urban grain of the Northern Quarter is instantly recognisable within the city context and the proposed external works are very much coherent with providing contemporary accommodation that fits well within this urban narrative. The use of materials such as timber for the windows at first and second floor to match the originals, and the cleaning of the external brickwork will maintain the building's historic position and identity within the street scene.

The introduction of quality materials at ground floor – such as the proposed glazed shop frontages – will enable the building to maintain its original commercial focus and relationship with the street, whilst providing more contemporary and let-able retail accommodation.

Bringing vacant upper floors back into use, particularly residential use, not only provides additional income and security for the shop owner, but also helps to ensure that what are often important townscape buildings are kept in good repair (item 4.11).

The proposed works are very much inclined to reintegrate the building back into the urban context and with its original use of retail and office accommodation.

There has been much development within the Northern Quarter in the last few years and much of this has been established through the refurbishment of its existing buildings – which is one of the reasons that the area has maintained its historic character.

The proposals for the site, and the keen interest of the building's owners, Agecroft Investments, to revive this building to encourage the reuse of existing vacant floor space is a positive contribution to Thomas Street and the surrounding area.

Policies will need to be designed to allow the area to remain alive and prosperous, and to avoid unnecessarily detailed controls over businesses and householders, but at the same time to ensure that any new development accords with the area's special architectural and historic interest. (Item 4.16)

Proposals on the building make little impact on the Conservation Area as the scale of development is minor. The roof alterations do not alter the rooflines, and are not higher than the existing ridge line. The dormers are set back so the roofline is maintained and the form of the building and its relationship with the Conservation Area are maintained. The development will clean up, repair and introduce new areas of fabric to the building. Elevations to Carpenter Lane will no longer be a run down derelict building, but an elevation with life and a be a positive contribution to the area. Historic features of the building will be repaired, such as the lifting gear, which further adds to the character of the building and the area.

Evidence of the historic industry of the area as a textile base is found within the building. Existing pulley systems are to be maintained and repaired and will be features of the building within the floor plates.

The upper floors will come back into use through the new development and the ground floor active frontage will bring vibrancy and life to the building. Retail trade at ground floor will match the other trading companies around the area.

Many Conservation Areas include gap sites, or buildings that make no positive contribution to, or indeed detract from, the character or appearance of the area; their replacement should be a stimulus to imaginative, high quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area. What is important is not that new buildings should directly imitate earlier styles, but that they should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well-established character and appearance of its own. (Item 4.17)

The existing building may not be significant architecturally, but it has features and details which give it quality which will be enhanced by restoration. The architecture of the roof design is modern and follows forms of roofs and dormers which are readily found in the area. The large areas of glass, is a modern feature but contrasts and compliments the building forms. The building fenestration has a vertical proportion however the roof line has strong horizontality which is where the dormer generates its proportion.

Special regard should be had for such matters as scale, height, form, massing, respect for the traditional pattern of frontages, vertical or horizontal emphasis, and detailed design (e.g. the scale and spacing of window openings, and the nature and quality of materials). General planning standards should be applied sensitively in the interests of harmonising the new development with its neighbours in the Conservation Area. (Item 4.18)

The scale of the roof extension does not break the existing roofline. It is set away from the end elevations so the roofline is visible form all elevations.

It is intended to clad the dormers in a metal such as zinc, which is a modern material which will give crisp edges and clean lines. The building's neighbours are of poor condition and are not maintained. The development will raise the standard of the building in this area consequently enhancing the area.

Developments proposed to be carried out in a Conservation Area must give a high priority to the objective of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. (Item 4.19)

The building is currently in a derelict state, and is not enhancing the character of the area. Investment in the building will repair the building and make it safe and provide quality accommodation to the area. The modest modern interventions to the building and the fusion of old and new will also contribute to the quality of the architectural character of the building, and therefore the Conservation Area.

Whilst the character and appearance of Conservation Areas should always be given full weight in planning decisions, the objective of preservation can be achieved either by development which makes a positive contribution to an area's character or appearance, or by development which leaves character and appearance unharmed. (Item 4.20)

The building will certainly be a positive contribution to the area given its current state of disrepair. The additions to the building are modest, and do not impact greatly on the form of the building, and in fact will enhance the character of the building.