MORLEY MANAGEMENT LIMITED

Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3HU

SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

19th September 2007

COLLIERS CRE

international property consultants

collierscre.com

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Colliers CRE
Planning & Development
No. 1 Marsden Street
Manchester
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Contact: Thomas Jeremiah

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Brief

1.1 Colliers CRE (CCRE) Limited has been instructed by Morley Management Limited (hereafter referred to as Morley) to submit additional information in support of a planning application submitted to Manchester City Council (Hereafter referred to as MCC) in March 2007. The application is for the retention of an air conditioning unit installed at Westminster House, Portland Street, Manchester. Westminster House is identified on the site location Plan appended to this report (Appendix 1).

Background

1.2 The application was submitted on 15th March 2007 by Colliers CRE Building Consultancy Team but has not, at the time of writing this, been validated. Reasons provided by MCC for not validating the application were on the basis that an 'Air Conditioning Strategy' for the building is required given that there are a number of units on the building already. In response, an Air Conditioning Statement is enclosed with this Planning Statement to support the application.

1.3 In addition to the above, an email sent by Angela Leckie of MCC on the 18th July 2007 stated that MCC has concerns relating to the visual impact of the air conditioning unit and that once registered, it is likely that the application would be refused on visual amenity grounds (Appendix 2). In response, this Planning Statement has also been produced to provide details on why we consider the retention appropriate and what remediation measures will be undertaken to further screen the unit.

1.4 It has been established by both parties that there are no issues relating to noise in this instance.

1.5 Section 38 (6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless materials considerations indicate otherwise. This Statement outlines why the retention of the unit is appropriate having regard to this Act.

2.0 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

Site Location

2.1 Westminster House is located at 11 Portland Street and is directly south of the tram/bus stops at Piccadilly Gardens. The unit is located within the north-eastern part of the building fronting Aytoun Street where a tram line currently runs. Aytoun Street is not considered a primary route and is used by some pedestrians as a short cut to get to Piccadilly Train Station.

Description

2.2 Westminster House is a 1970's building situated on Portland Street running to the north west. The building itself is dated and is not considered to be an attractive landmark on this stretch of Portland Street. The building is 9 storey's in height, tiled and painted brown. The elevation to which the application relates is also brown but benefits from having a permanent flower bedding arrangement all along the elevation. At the time of writing this, there was planting in this bed but it is considered to be in need of maintenance.

2.3 The conditioning unit is situated within a roofed walkway and is considered to be within the fabric of the building as it does not project form the external elevation.

3.0 PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Pre- application discussions were not undertaken prior to the submission of the application in March however, discussions were in place post submission to determine what additional information would be required to allow MCC to register the application.

3.2 A meeting held on the 11th July 2007 revealed that MCC require a strategy for present and future air conditioning units on the building to enable determination. MCC considers that this additional information is required to determine the application and therefore, the Strategy accompanies this Statement as a separate document.

3.3 Subsequent to this meeting, MCC informed CCRE that having now undertaken a site visit of the unit, it was considered visually unacceptable and that refusal was to be the likely recommendation once the application was registered. This Statement has therefore been produced to provide additional information and proposals for remediation measures if necessary.

3.4 The remediation measures proposed include a detailed planting scheme on the existing planting border which Morley welcomes. As such, MCC can ensure that the retention of the unit will not result in any visual harm by conditioning this planting scheme to their satisfaction and it is expected that once completed, the unit will not be visible from the street scene. An illustrative plan showing the proposed planting is attached in the appendices (Appendix 5)

4.0 THE LOCATION & REQUIREMENT

Introduction

4.1 This section outlines the reasons why the air conditioning unit is required and why it has been located where it has.

Location

4.2 The unit is located within the fabric of the building on the north-eastern side at ground floor level. The unit is placed within an internal maintenance walkway behind a steel mesh screen and a landscaped border. Approximately 40-50 cm of the top of the unit can be viewed from the street scene. The location of the unit within the building is identified in Appendix 3.

4.3 As the building was constructed in the 1970's, it does not accommodate an overall air conditioning scheme to maintain the whole building. Each floor operates its own conditioning methods tailored to meet the needs of the occupant's. Locating the unit elsewhere within the building is therefore not feasible.

4.4 In May 2007, a survey was undertaken by JSA Chartered Engineers to investigate the possibility of locating the air conditioning unit on the roof of Westminster House (Appendix 4). The conclusions to this investigation are summarised as follows:

- An electrical supply is required to the condensing unit which would require additional energy to run had it been sited on the roof and the location chosen is therefore more energy efficient.
- To place the unit on the roof would require a complete refit and inclusion of a distribution system and installation of metres to fairly charge tenants. The cost of this work would compromise the commercial viability of letting out the offices.
- The system as installed would not be suitable on the roof if this was the only available location. There are limits of vertical distribution with the system selected. To position the condenser on the roof would have reduced the horizontal runs possible and the design layout would have been severely compromised.
- The length of the refrigeration pipe work has been kept to minimum for environmental reasons which would not have been achieved if the unit had been located on the roof.

4.5 Clearly, locating the system on the roof of the building is not viable.

Requirement

4.6 Westminster House was built in the 1970's and an air conditioning scheme was not incorporated into the building. The building accommodates a number of offices and working practices since the construction of the building have changed in that IT equipment is commonly used thus resulting in a warmer working atmosphere. In response to this, tenants entering the building now require air conditioning units to maintain a comfortable temperature within the work place and to meet their individual requirements.

4.7 In this instance, the roof was an inappropriate place to position the unit as the building was not designed internally to accommodate such a unit as explained in Chapter 2.3.

Summary

4.8 In summary, Morley's has investigated alternatives for the location of the unit including the roof and it is considered that the current positioning is the most appropriate and most sustainable.

5.0 THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Introduction

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The Development Plan in this instance is the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP) adopted on the 21st July 1995.

The Relevant UDP Policies

5.3 The site is within the City Centre but unallocated on the proposals map. Therefore, only general policies apply.

UDP Objectives

5.4 The UDP sets out MCC's overall objectives for planning in Manchester. Of these objectives, the most appropriate for the assessment of this application is to *"improve the City Centre environment for the large numbers of pedestrians that use it daily"*.

UDP Objectives Response

5.5 Morley recognises that MCC's aspirations for this particular area of Portland Street and is proposing that a landscaping scheme be incorporated by way of condition to further screen the unit. Whilst planting currently existing along the north east elevation, discussion with MCC indicate that there is still concern relating to the visual impact of the unit when viewed form the street scene. Therefore, it is proposed to replant the border with new vegetation that would satisfactorily screen the unit.

Policy DC16.1 - Policy Overview

5.6 This policy considers the retention of trees and encouragement of new vegetation within the public realm and along footpaths.

Policy DC16.1 - Policy Analysis

5.7 Whilst this policy is likely to be applied to larger developments, it is considered appropriate in this instance as it provides an opportunity for MCC to encourage further planting along Aytoun Street by way of a condition. The plan in appendix 5 shows that planting can obscure the conditioning unit as well as improve the street scene of this particular area.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Guide to Development in Manchester – April 2007

5.8 In April 2007, MCC adopted its SPD to guide development in Manchester. This document outlines the Council's expectations of which the following appropriate issues are addressed:

- Design
- Environmental Standards
- The Street Hierarchy
- Design for health

5.9 These matters are considered in the context of retaining the conditioning unit as installed:

Design

5.10 The unit itself is of a typical air conditioning design and it would be inappropriate to describe it as an attractive feature. Nonetheless, it is also unreasonable to describe it as an unattractive feature. However, as MCC have raised concern regarding its impact upon the street scene and it has been illustrated that the unit cannot be accommodated elsewhere on the building; it is proposed to incorporate a landscaping scheme of which an illustrative layout is appended to this report (Appendix 5). By providing this planting, it is possible to completely screen the unit and provide an additional attractive planting scheme. This will allow the office to continue functioning with the conditioning unit whilst improving the overall appearance of the streetscene in accordance with the SPD.

Environmental Standards

5.11 The SPD sets out the Council's commitments to sustainable development and encourages high standards of energy efficiency. As explained in Chapter 4.4, locating the unit to where it is, is more sustainable than locating it on the roof as it is more energy efficient.

The Street Hierarchy

5.12 Whilst this matter is more relevant to new builds, it is still appropriate to mention it as it explains the Council's vision in providing high quality elevational and boundary treatments. Westminster House is a building that is dated but has the advantage of having existing planting boundaries including one on the north eastern elevation. By taking advantage of this, a detailed landscaping scheme can be incorporated to screen the unit and improve the wellbeing of those who may pass it as pedestrians and for those working in the building.

Design for Health

5.13 The SPD recognises that by improving the quality and aesthetics of the built environment, it is also possible to improve the sense of well being of those who live and work in Manchester. By providing the additional planting by way of condition, it is possible to significantly improve the appearance of the immediate area and ensure that the unit is not visible.

Summary

5.14 In summary, the proposed scheme offers an opportunity to improve the quality of the environment by introducing a planting scheme. By attaching a condition requiring a planting scheme along the northeastern boundary to the satisfaction of the Council, it is possible to significantly enhance and soften the built environment. This approach is considered appropriate in context with Governmental Circular 11/95.

6.0 ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

6.1 This chapter outlines the planning considerations which are considered appropriate in the assessment of this application.

Visual Amenity

6.2 MCC have previously raised concern that the air conditioning unit is detrimental to the visual appearance of the street scene. The unit is within the fabric of the building and does not project from the building. When viewed from the main street scene on Portland Street when facing Westminster House, the unit cannot be viewed. When approaching Westminster House from the north west along Portland Street/Aytoun Street, the top of the unit can be viewed within the maintenance walkway behind an elevational wall and steel mesh screening. It is not however an immediately obvious feature unless one is specifically looking for it.

6.3 In Angela Leckie's email to CCRE on the 18th July 2007, concern is raised that the unit is a *"large and highly visible unit that is clearly seen above the level of the internal wall"*. CCRE disagrees on this matter but nonetheless is of the opinion that the unit can be screened to a high standard with a detailed planting scheme along the planting boundary as explained in Chapter 5. Not only would this screen the unit but it would also enhance the overall streetscene and provide opportunities that are not currently a prerequisite.

Noise

6.4 MCC has not raised concern relating to noise from the unit and it is evident on site that this consideration is not an issue.

Summary

6.5 Having listened to the concerns of MMC, we propose a strategy to screen this unit with the planting of new vegetation along the north eastern elevation which will almost, if not completely obscure the unit. This will have additional benefits in that it would also improve the character and appearance of the streetscene. Whilst the plan attached in appendix 5 is for illustrative purposes, a condition attached to an approval will allow for a detailed scheme to be produced.

7.0 KEY CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

7.1 Colliers CRE (CCRE) Limited is instructed by Morley Management Limited to submit this supporting planning statement to form part of the application as submitted on 15th March 2007. The application is for the retention of an air conditioning unit at Westminster House.

Summary of Key Benefits

7.2 The retention of the air conditioning unit would deliver the following key benefits.

- The continued function of the ground floor of Westminster House as offices.
- An opportunity for a detailed landscaping scheme that is otherwise not a prerequisite. This would be provided along the whole of the north eastern elevation and would enhance the appearance of the locality and the well being of those who benefit from it be they a pedestrian or user of the building.
- The unit is within the fabric of the building and would be partially screened by an existing wall and mesh screening.
- Given the nature of the building, the unit at ground floor level is more environmentally efficient and sustainable that had it been placed on the roof of the building.

Statutory Requirements

7.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.4 The scheme has been tested against the adopted Development Plan and accords with its provisions.

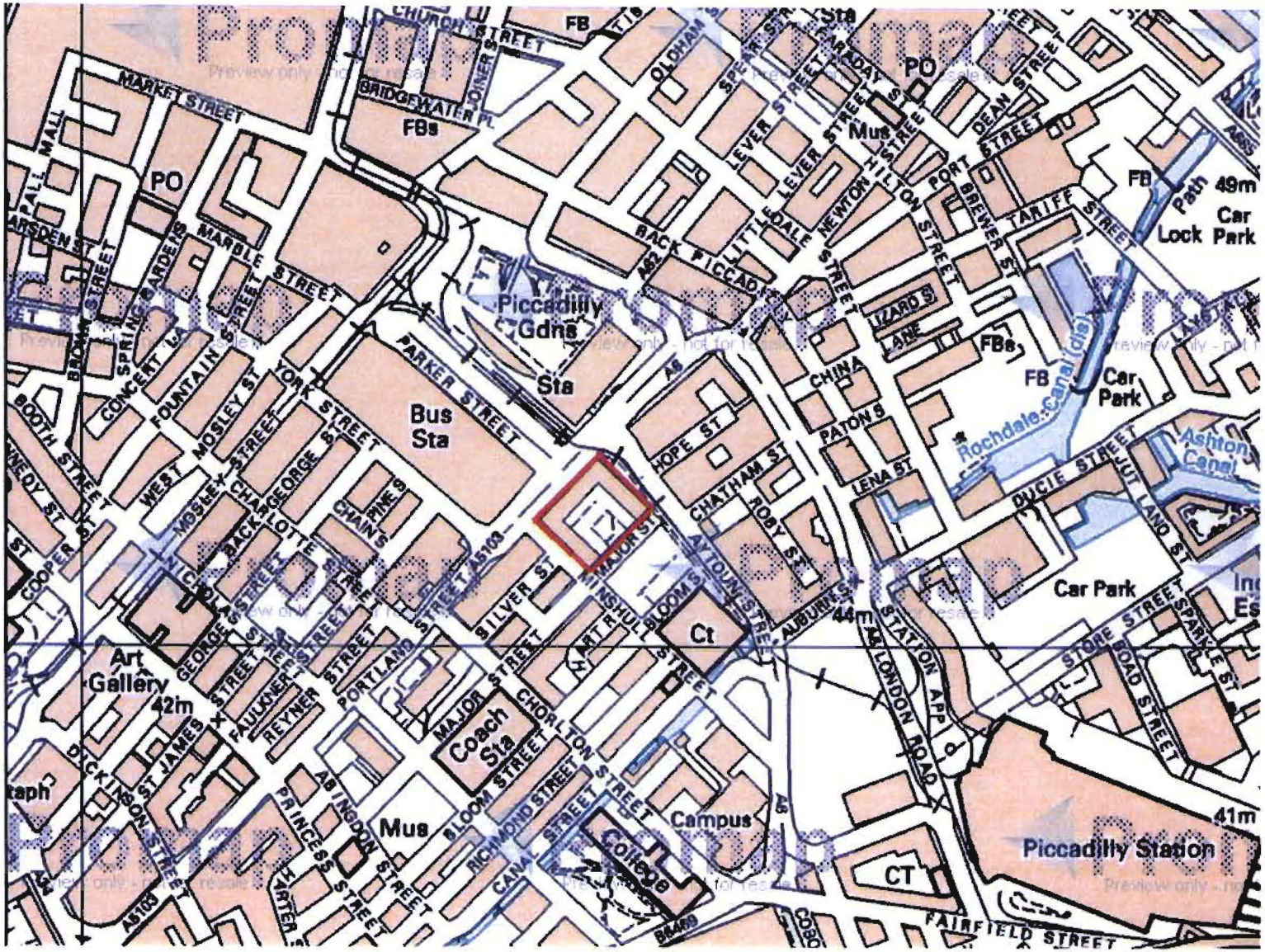
7.5 Other material considerations have also been considered.

7.6 Having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and all other material considerations outlined in this statement, I consider that there is overwhelming support for the approval of this application.

7.7 On behalf of Morley Management Limited, I therefore respectfully request that the planning application be granted.

Appendix One

Site Location Plan (Note: Not to Scale)



Appendix Two

Contact **Angela Leckie**
Telephone **0161 234 4651**
Fax **0161 234 4643**

FAO Julia Ruddock
Colliers CRE
No.1 Marsden Street
Manchester
M2 1HW

Our reference AL/WESTMINSTER HOUSE AIR CON

Your reference

Date 20 July 2007

Dear Sir(s)

RE:AIR CONDITIONING STRATEGY FOR WESTMINSTER HOUSE.

Further to our meeting on 11 July and subsequent correspondence. As you know the City Council is very concerned about the piecemeal approach to providing air conditioning at the above building (and indeed a number of office building within the City Centre) and as a consequence the number of applications for inappropriately sited equipment that we have been receiving and the potential impact that this approach could have on the overall appearance of the building. As you are aware it is considered that a better approach would be to prepare a building wide strategy for the provision of air conditioning within the building and you have now agreed to draw up such a strategy under our guidance.

At our meeting you requested guidance from us as to how to go about drawing up the strategy and what it should consist of. As requested please find below what is believed to be an appropriate approach to drawing up the strategy.

Stage 1. The first thing that I would suggest needs to be done is to establish what the current provision of air conditioning is within the building by carrying out an audit of what equipment is present, where is it located, what parts of the building the equipment serves and whether the equipment is in use or redundant or whether there is existing equipment that is likely to require an upgrade.

Stage 2. You should then seek to establish areas of the building such as the roof, basement and service areas where additional equipment could be located without being visible from surrounding streets as well as areas where there may be spare capacity because there is redundant equipment that could be removed.

Stage 3. Having identified what existing provision there is, you should seek to establish the amount of likely additional equipment that might be required as part of a standard present day office fit out scheme for areas that do not have any air

conditioning equipment or is likely to required as part of an upgrade or existing inadequate systems.

Stage 4. You will then need to undertake an exercise to allocate the likely additional equipment within the available space. If at this stage it becomes apparent that there is going to be a significant shortfall in space provision within areas which are not visible then other options such as the creation of a suitably designed enclosure, freestanding or otherwise will need to be considered.

My assistant Angela Leckie would be able to review progress with you as and when required but I would suggest that once you have reached stage 4 and have an idea of what problems if any there may be in locating equipment in areas that would not be visible that this would be the most appropriate time to review progress with the City Council so that advice can be given about how additional equipment might best be dealt with.

Yours sincerely

David Roscoe
for Head of Planning

Jeremiah Thomas

From: Ruddock Julia
Sent: 16 July 2007 10:15
To: Khan Omar
Subject: FW: Westminster House

-----Original Message-----
From: Angela Leckie [mailto:a.leckie@manchester.gov.uk]
Sent: 16 July 2007 08:37
To: Ruddock Julia
Subject: Westminster House

Julia

Further to our meeting last Wednesday. I have now visited the site and I am aiming to discuss how we now take the current unregistered application forward with my Group Leader Dave Roscoe within the next few days (he does not return from leave until tomorrow). What would be useful to have by tomorrow, by E-mail is a written confirmation from you confirming that you will under our guidance be drawing up a strategy for the location of future plant requirements on the building and an estimated timescale within which this will be completed.

Can you also confirm your understanding of the status of the existing unauthorised unit adjacent to the proposed location of the unit proposed for application ref no 082482.

I look forward to hearing from you in relation to the above in the near future.

Angela Leckie
Planner
City Centre Team
Manchester City Council
Planning
Town Hall Extension
Manchester I
M60 3NY

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Fax: 0161 234 4643
Textphone 0161 234 4505
E- Mail a.leckie@notes.manchester.gov.uk

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Jeremiah Thomas

From: Angela Leckie [a.leckie@manchester.gov.uk]
Sent: 18 July 2007 11:14
To: Ruddock Julia
Cc: Khan Omar; Janine Renshaw
Subject: Westminster House

Julia

As promised I have now discussed the way forward on this with Dave Roscoe my group leader and we have agreed the following:

1. That on the basis of your written undertaking to devise a Strategy Statement for the provision of plant within the building we will now be registering Omar's application for the one unit within the ground floor walkway.

2. That within the context of that strategy we will have to look at the unauthorised units within the ground floor walkway which it is felt have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the building. You should note that if we are unable to agree a satisfactory approach to removing or relocating these then we may have to consider enforcement action.

Within the next week it is my intention to write to you more formally to confirm the above and to set out a format of and timescales for the agreement of the Strategy.

Regards

Angela

Angela Leckie
Planner
City Centre Team
Manchester City Council
Planning
Town Hall Extension
Manchester I
M60 3NY

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Jeremiah Thomas

From: Angela Leckie [a.leckie@manchester.gov.uk]
Sent: 18 July 2007 14:02
To: Ruddock Julia
Cc: Khan Omar; Janine Renshaw
Subject: Westminster House

Julia

I did try and ring both you and then Omar before I went out but went to your voicemail. Janine has been on leave and today was the first chance that I have had to discuss the proposals with her. I was assuming that you were applying for the unit at the end of the service corridor particularly as Omar's letter of 29 March refers to the unit being hidden and that it 'should not be visible from street level'. It is now clear that what you are actually applying for is retrospective consent for a large highly visible unit that is clearly seen above the level of the internal wall.

On this basis whilst we would be happy to register the application at this time it is likely that consent would be refused on visual amenity grounds.

I will be reviewing our position on this within the next few days and will be writing to you further in relation to this matter.

Regards

Angela

Angela Leckie
Planner
City Centre Team
Manchester City Council
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Town Hall Extension
Manchester I
M60 3NY

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Fax: 0161 234 4643
Textphone 0161 234 4505
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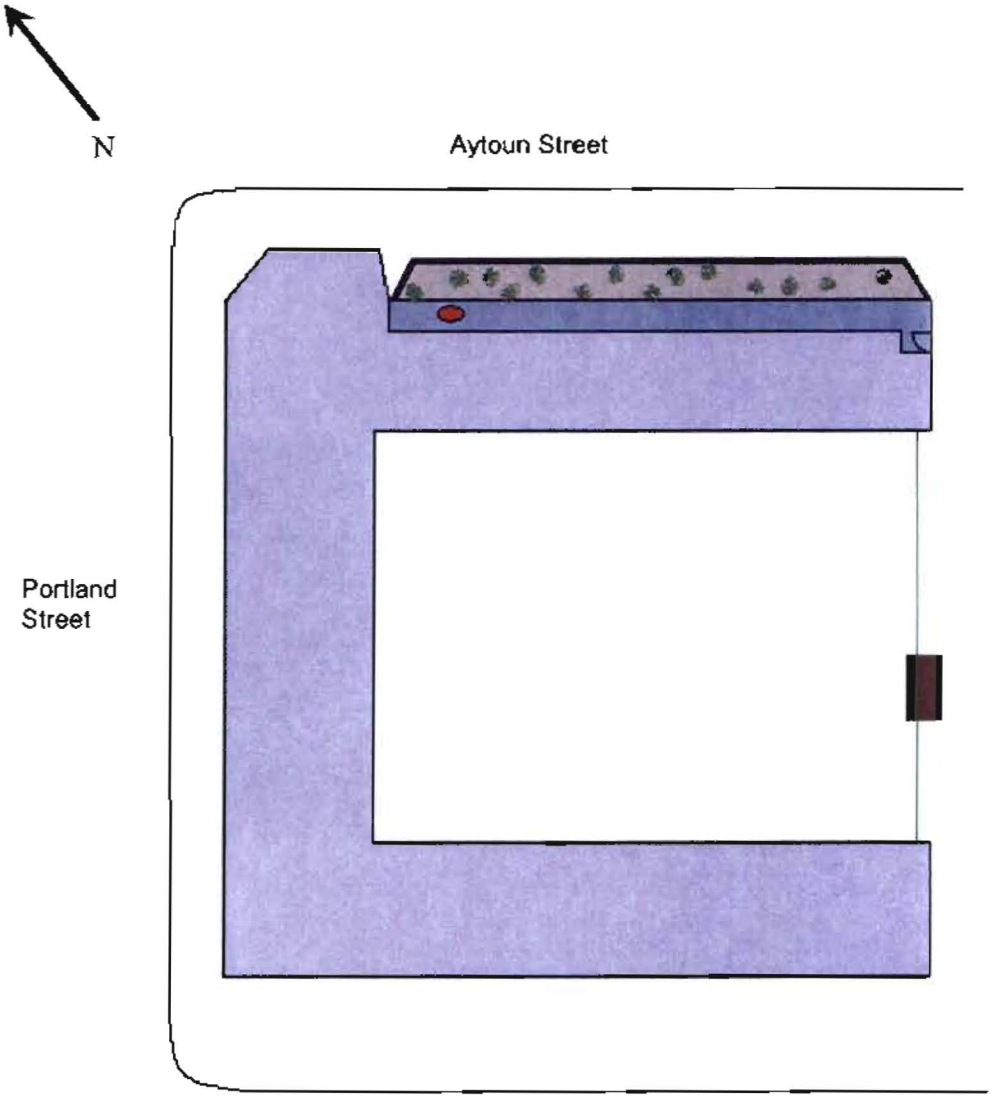
Appendix Three

Location Of Air Conditioning Unit



KEY

- Existing Planting/Landscaped Area
- Position of Air Conditioning Unit
- Internal Maintenance Walkway
- Footprint of Westminster House

Note: Plans not Scaled

Appendix Four

JSA

Chartered Engineers

E.Mail: jsteadassociates@aol.com

The Business Centre
5 Stanley St
Preston
PR3 3NJ

Tel/fax: 01772 783666

28th May 2007

RECEIVED

Mr O Khan
Colliers CRE
1 Marsden St
Manchester
M1 1HW

Dear Omar

Ground Floor, Westminster House, Manchester

Our conversation regarding the design and positioning of the condensing unit refers.

The external condensing unit is located in its current position as a result of the following main design considerations.

1. There are limits of vertical distribution with the system selected. To position the condenser on the roof would have reduced the horizontal runs possible and the design layout would have been severely compromised. In fact it is very likely the system installed would not have been suitable if this was the only location for the condenser. [We have not completed a design for this scenario.]

2. The length of refrigeration pipe work and consequential gas charge in our view should be kept to a minimum for environmental reasons and also to assist ongoing maintenance and service.

3. The electrical supply is required to the condensing unit. To place the unit on the roof would have meant major changes to the distribution and metering so to fairly recharge tenants.

I hope the above information is satisfactory for your purpose.

Yours sincerely

John Stead

BSc(Hons)MSc(H-W)CEng MCIBSE

Appendix Five

Westminster House
External Beds

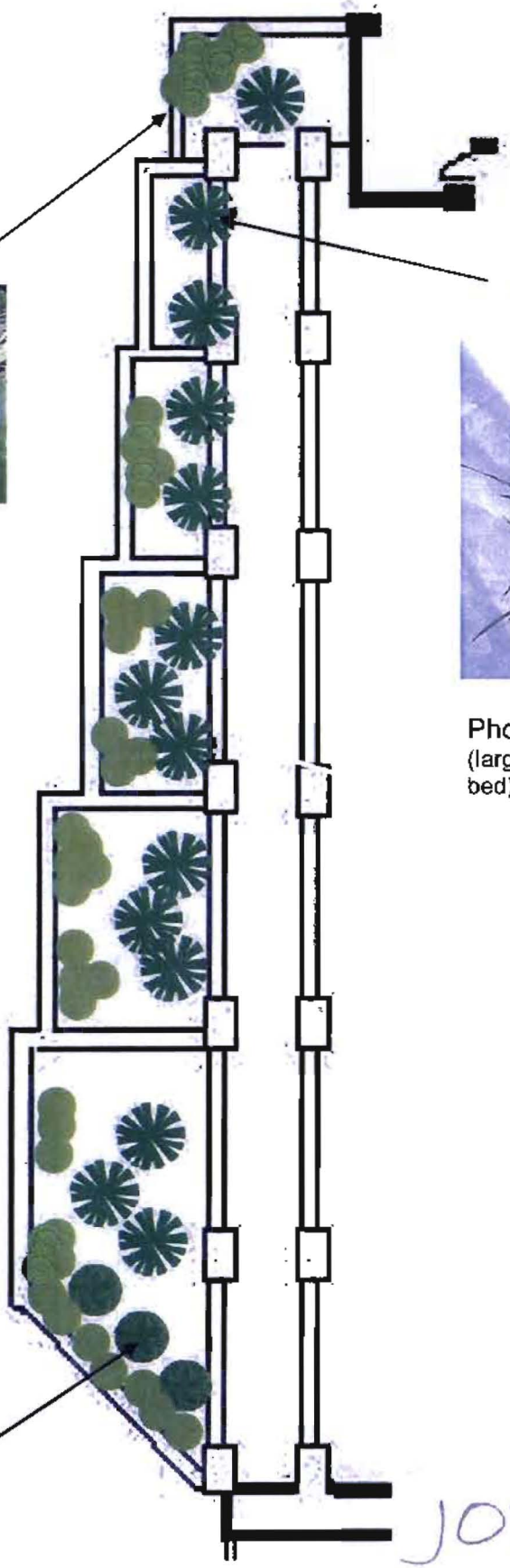
Layout Plan



Grasses



Phormium Tenax
(larger variety than in signage bed)



Buxus Ball



JORDANS
INTERIOR LANDSCAPES