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Our ref 1257-NLP-LT-CAC01
Your ref

Dear Emily

Manchester: Application for Conservation Area Consent – Cenotaph relocation

On behalf of Manchester City Council (Town Hall Complex Transformation Programme), we are pleased to submit an application for Conservation Area consent for the following:

'The dismantling and removal of unlisted walls and benches around the Cenotaph Memorial'

The application was submitted via the Planning Portal on 02 August 2012 [ref. PP-01994439] and comprises the following:

- Completed application forms and ownership certificates;
- Location Plan and drawings (prepared by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture);
- Heritage Assessment (prepared by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture);

Background

St Peter's Square was built on the southern edge of Manchester in the late 18th century. The Church of St Peter was constructed in 1788-94 to the designs of James Wyatt, to serve the growing resident population. It is clear from early maps that the square was formed specifically to provide a generous setting for the church. Throughout mid-late 19th century however, as demands for commercial premises increased, residential buildings and public institutions were replaced with commercial buildings, offices and warehouses. With a dwindling residential population, the demolition of St Peter's Church in 1907 marked the end of the residential use of the area. The site was marked by the memorial cross designed by Temple Moore. Following the Second World War, the memorial cross and Cenotaph (built 1924) were incorporated within a formal garden scheme designed by L.C Howitt.

Site and Surroundings

The St Peter's Cross is located on an island site centrally within St Peter's Square and is bound by the Metrolink tram line to the north and west, Mosley Street to the east and Peter Street to the

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south. The Cross is located centrally within the memorial gardens, with the Cenotaph located to the south end of the island site.

Proposals

The application seeks permission for the dismantling and storage off-site of the Memorial Cross. This application is submitted in conjunction with an application for planning permission and listed building consent for the dismantling of the (Grade II*) Cenotaph War Memorial and reinstatement of the Cenotaph, new memorial wall and seating and public realm works on land adjacent to the east of the Town Hall.

Consultation

In March 2011, Manchester City Council Executive received a report setting out proposals to consult the public on the potential relocation of the Cenotaph to the Town Hall, following the public consultation of the shortlisted designs for St Peter's Square in 2010. What had become clear during the exhibition were the number of comments made that the existing layout of the Cenotaph was less than satisfactory. Particular reference was made not only to the constraints caused by its location which impacted upon the Remembrance Sunday event itself, but also the view that it no longer provided an appropriate setting for the many people who visited the Cenotaph daily. Informal discussions with the Church Authorities and Veterans' Associations were subsequently held to consider options for creating a more appropriate setting for this important asset. Consideration was also given to the wider St Peter's Square proposals and the impact on the Peace Gardens. The consultation ran for 3 months ending on 9 September 2011. A number of issues were raised on the relocation of the Cenotaph, which have been taken into account during the subsequent design development process, although it was noted that its relocation was generally welcomed by the Veterans Associations and the Church authorities.

An extensive programme of consultation has also been carried out with Manchester City Council, English Heritage, War Memorials Trust, British Legion, Transport for Greater Manchester, 20th Century Society, Church representatives and other key stakeholders. Discussions have continued until July 2012 and took place on a regular basis.

The meetings with these groups have helped to gather information regarding their parties concerns and expectations. These groups were generally in support of the proposals and hoped that a more suitable site could be found than the present location and that the monument would be properly cared for.

Presentations were made by the Veteran Associations and Heritage Architects to explain the proposals. The outcome of these meetings was support from the Veteran Groups for the relocation of the Cenotaph for the design development to include seating and a wall for installation of additional plaques.

Meetings to consider the different locations that could accommodate the relocation of the Cenotaph were held and this concluded that the Peace Gardens and its immediacies were the optimal location for the creation of a new setting for the monument.

A meeting was also held with Michael Craig from Greater Manchester Police Design for Security team to evaluate the proposals in terms of potential crime and disorder effects. Discussions on various aspects of the scheme took place, with no major crime and disorder impacts being identified.

Planning Policy

The proposal complies with the policies and proposals of the Manchester Core Strategy, the 'saved' policies of the Unitary Development Plan and national policy, particularly in relation to the need to preserve and prevent harm to heritage assets. The overriding criteria from Development Plan policy in relation to the historic environment is that proposals should preserve or enhance the character and setting of buildings and spaces which contribute to the City's heritage assets. The Council also wishes to enhance the appearance of Conservation Areas and will, where appropriate, designate further areas.

In line with national policy, the Development Plan recognises the positive contribution that conserving heritage assets can make to regeneration and the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment, particularly through leisure, tourism and economic development. In addition, national planning seeks to prevent harm to heritage assets as a result of development.

Heritage Considerations

The current setting of the Stone Cross has been adversely affected by the presence of the Metrolink tram station which abuts the site to the north-west. The deleterious impact of the Metrolink platform on the Cross and its setting is unquestionable. However, the Stone Cross can still be read and understood as marking and commemorating the former St Peter's Church thereby yielding historic value. As a prominent structure within the grouping of the War Memorial and Memorial Gardens the Stone Cross has high communal and associative values.

The proposal to dismantle and store St Peter's Cross is in order to mitigate against the risk of damage to the listed structure whilst the proposed works to the Cenotaph are underway, therefore it is proposed that the dismantling of St Peter's Cross is undertaken before works to the Cenotaph commence. The Cross is a more slender and therefore more fragile structure than the Cenotaph and its close proximity to the Cenotaph has resulted in the decision to remove it from the site first. The removal of the Cross will also allow for the public realm works to take place within St Peter's Square without risk of damage to the Grade II Listed structure.

As such the temporary adverse impact of the proposed works to St Peter's Cross is considered to cause 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the heritage asset which is outweighed against the public and heritage benefits of the ensuing proposals in the area.

The reinstatement treatment of the site will be agreed with the City Council.

Further information is contained within the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture.

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Conclusion

The proposed works are necessary to facilitate the proposals for the St Peter's Square transformation project and the relocation of the Cenotaph and will ensure that the Cross is preserved for future generations to appreciate. The Cross will be reinstated in a location to be agreed with the City Council within the footprint of St Peter's Church.

The development proposal complies with the policies and proposals of the Manchester Core Strategy, the 'saved' policies of the Unitary Development Plan and national policy. There is therefore a presumption in favour of the proposed development arising from Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act and as a consequence, it is considered that Listed Building Consent should be granted for the scheme.

We trust that you have sufficient information to validate and progress the application and we will contact you shortly to discuss its progress. In the meantime, however, should you have any queries or wish to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0161 837 6130.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Matta
Associate Director