Heritage Statement – Northern Assurance Building

Albert Square Portfolio, Manchester

February 2016

Turley
Heritage

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Client
LJ Group
Our reference
LJGH3001

17 February 2015

1. Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Turley Heritage on behalf of LJ Partnership to support an application for listed building consent for "*new glazed entrance doors, internal refurbishment of the ground floor and common areas including lifts, toilet accommodation, office accommodation and a new plant area to be located to the rear of the building at 5th floor level*" together with an application for planning permission for "new glazed entrance doors and *a new plant area to be located to the rear of the building at 5th floor level*" (the 'Proposed Development') at the Northern Assurance Building; 9-21 Princess Street (the 'Application Site').

1.2 The Northern Assurance Building is a grade II listed Victorian Office building, designed by Waddington and Dunkerley and completed in 1902 and is located within the Albert Square Conservation Area (designated in 1972).

1.3 LJ Partnership has recently acquired the property along with two other office buildings in the Albert Square vicinity; 2 Mount Street (grade II* listed) and the adjacent Victoria Building (grade II listed) at 1-7 Princess Street and 59-61 Cross Street. The building has failed to attract any new occupiers since Haines Watts took space in 2011. The proposed works will upgrade the building and its services with the intention of bringing the building back into full occupancy. Separately at ground floor, Piccolino's restaurant is currently being extended to utilise an additional ground floor unit within the building (due for completion March 2016).

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the Government's national planning policy on the conservation of the historic environment. In respect of information requirements for applications, it sets out that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.[1]"

1.5 To comply with these requirements, Section 3 of this Statement provides an assessment of significance of the Northern Assurance Building; proportionate to both the importance of the asset and the likely impacts. This assessment is undertaken on the basis of published information, archival research and an on-site visual survey.

1.6 Section 4 provides an assessment of the impact of the proposed works on the significance of the Northern Assurance Building, in light of the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national policy set out in the NPPF, and local planning policy for the historic environment.

[1] DCLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 128.

2. Context and Historic Development

Victorian Offices

2.1 Historic England's listing guidance for commercial buildings[2] identifies the commercial office building (as opposed to law and government buildings) as a Victorian development. It states that:

"Offices emerged out of the development of business in the various forms of Exchange buildings in the eighteenth century. Private or speculative offices, as a distinct building type, are a development of the Victorian age: bespoke premises for the sole conducting of business do not feature in the Georgian period with the single exception of the legal chambers in London's Inns of Court, which still survive in some numbers."

2.2 Prior to this, business had occurred primarily in private or merchants houses, inns, workshops and warehouses, or fronting factories. The emergence of office buildings reflected the country's huge growth in domestic and foreign business during the Victorian period; particularly in northern industrial cities such as Manchester which is noted in the listing guidance as retaining outstanding examples of Victorian commercial office buildings.

2.3 Due to increasing land prices, building heights within city centres increased to accommodate more letting space within sites. Commercial pressures also advanced important innovations in plan and structure to overcome problems of light and ventilation. Central light wells clad with reflective white tiles/bricks and internal glazed partitions were introduced to provide light into deep floor-plates.

2.4 From the mid-19th century buildings typically combined offices of varying ranks, meeting rooms and fire-proof strong rooms. Many combined ground-floor shops, offices or banks, with further offices on the upper floors.

2.5 The elevations were often impressively treated. Classical or Italianate styles were popular as they gave an appearance of dependable dignity. Grand and distinctive exteriors provided a corporate identity and for lettable office space distinguished developments from competitors.

Development of the Victorian Office Building in Manchester

2.6 In the first half of the 19th century, Manchester experienced unprecedented growth as a result of its textile industry to become an internationally important city. As the city's businesses and commerce grew, so did the demand for office space. As the century progressed, increased land prices and pollution within the city centre led to the upper and middle classes leaving the city centre to live in the surrounding townships. Parts of the city were redeveloped for commercial purposes and at increased heights to account for the increased cost of land. The Pevsner Architectural Guide for Manchester notes:

[2] Historic England (2011) Designation and Listing Selection Guide, Commerce and Exchange Buildings.

"The 1870s and 1880s saw the virtual rebuilding of several city streets, with the next generation of warehouses along Princess Street and Portland Street, and new shops and offices along Deansgate and the lower part of King Street. Italianate and Gothic styles continued, seen in the architecture of some of the better local firms such as Clegg & Knowles, Pennington and Bridgen, and G.T. Redmayne.[3]"

2.7 After the creation of Albert Square and the building of the Town Hall (completed 1877), the surrounding area became a fashionable location for office development. The Town Hall influenced the design of new buildings in Albert Square; many of which reflect its gothic style.

Site Development

2.8 Historic Map regression shows that the area around Princess Street was laid out in a rough grid pattern in the second half of the 18th century. The Site of the Northern Assurance Building had been developed by the first Ordnance Survey Map published 1848 (Fig2.1).

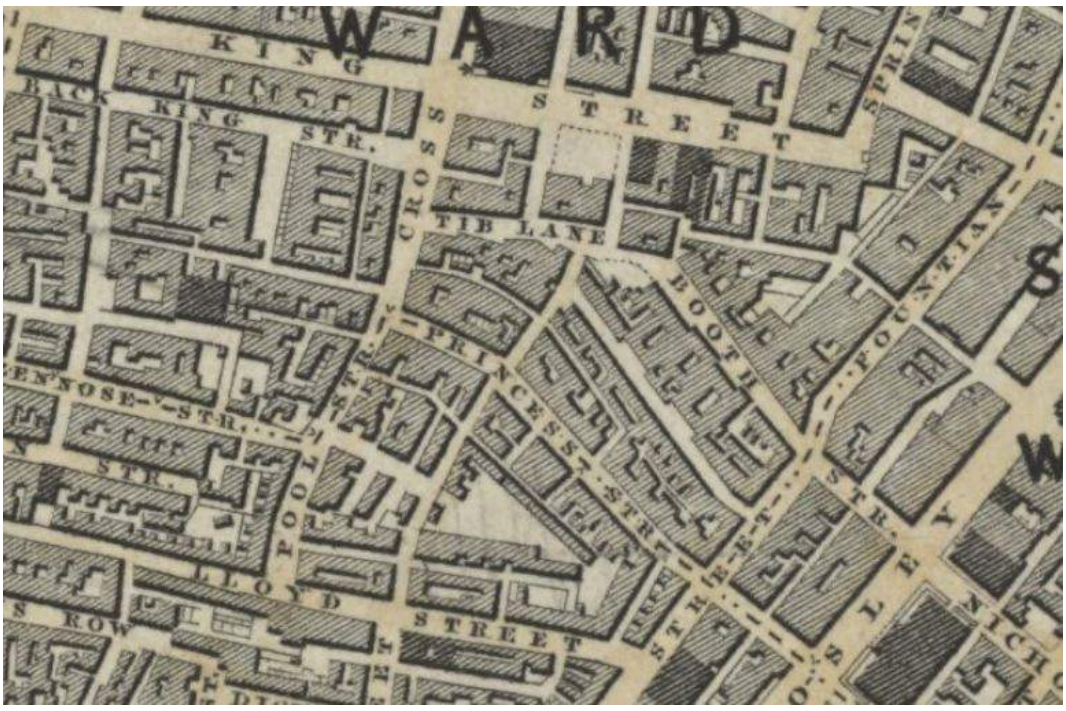


Figure 2.1: Ordnance Survey Map Extract, published 1848

2.9 The Northern Assurance Building was designed by Waddington and Dunkerley and was completed in 1902. It was under construction when the Goad Fire Map for this part of Manchester was being surveyed in 1901 (Fig 2.2). The Map shows that the building was completed in two consecutive phases; 21 Princes Street, 7 and 8 Clarence Street were a later extension; something which is confirmed by a sales brochure for the building (Figs 2.3 and 2.4, full brochure included at Appendix 2).

[3] Hartwell, Clare (2001) Pevsner Architectural Guides: Manchester

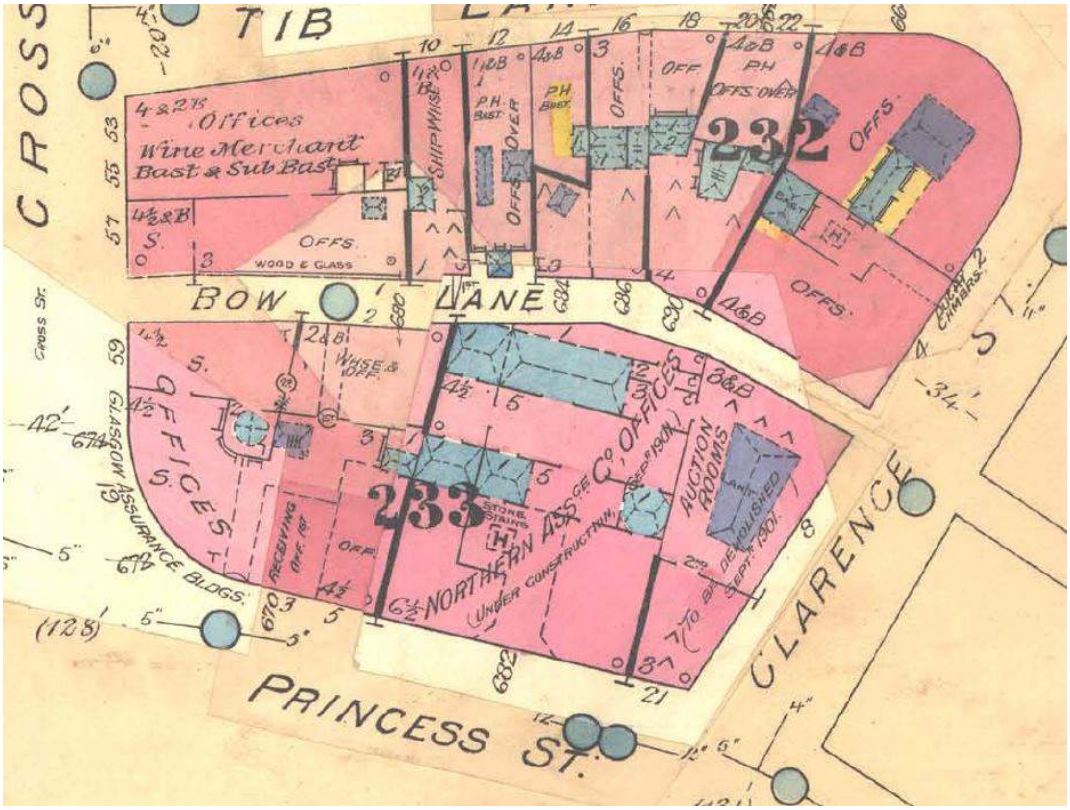


Figure 2.2: Goad Fire Map, surveyed 1901

2.10 The brochure shows the original floor plans of the basement, ground and first floor. The upper floors, with the exception of the attic floor, are likely to have had the same floor plan as the first floor. The Northern Assurance Company occupied space on the ground and first floors; accessed via the corner entrance at Princess Street and Clarence Street. It is unclear from the brochure whether the Northern Assurance Company occupied offices on the upper floors. The tenanted offices were accessed from the main entrance on Princess Street. The ground floor frontages were intended to be altered and the office space subdivided according to the tenants needs[4].

2.11 Although no original elevations are available, historic photographs do not indicate any considerable alterations to the exterior of the building (Figs 2.5 and 2.6) except at ground floor level where shop fronts have been altered according to tenants' needs, as anticipated.

2.12 Figs 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9 show that the entrance from Princess Street has been altered. The original double doors which filled the arched doorway were, by 1988, replaced with a smaller set of double doors with a timber panel above. The door was replaced again c1994 with the current door and a single pane fanlight added above (ref: 045678/FO/CITY1/94). The door to the shop on the left has been replaced and pre-1988, a doorway was inserted to into the right hand side unit, where previously there had been a window. The ground floor plan from c1902 does not show an interior door between the entrance door and the staircase. The interior door shown in Fig 2.7 is mid-20th century in style has been subsequently been replaced c1994 (ref 045678/FO/CITY1/94). The large leaded light fanlight in Fig 2.7 is likely to have been an original feature but has subsequently been in-filled.

[4] Northern Assurance Building Brochure (unknown date, c1902), see appendix

2.13 A number of dormer windows have been inserted into the rear attic roof slope and c 1995, a single storey roof top office extension was added (ref: 047752/LO/CITY1/95/ and 047751/FO/CITY1/95).

2.14 In 2009 listed building consent and planning permission were granted for the refurbishment and extension of the building including alterations to a light well and the removal of a roof at the rear of the premises to extent the third, fourth and fifth floors to provide upgraded and new office accommodation (ref: 089256/LO/2009/C1). This permission does not appear to have been implemented.

2.15 As set out in more detail in Section 3, there is evidence of alteration works to the interior from the mid-20th century onwards. The absence of historic photographs of the interior and planning and building control records for this period limits the information on these changes to the building.

2.16 The above historic research and review of planning/building control records indicate frequent alterations to the internal office space, lobbies and ground floor restaurant demonstrating successive changes to the building (at least c1948, 1970s,1980s, c1994 and c2009).

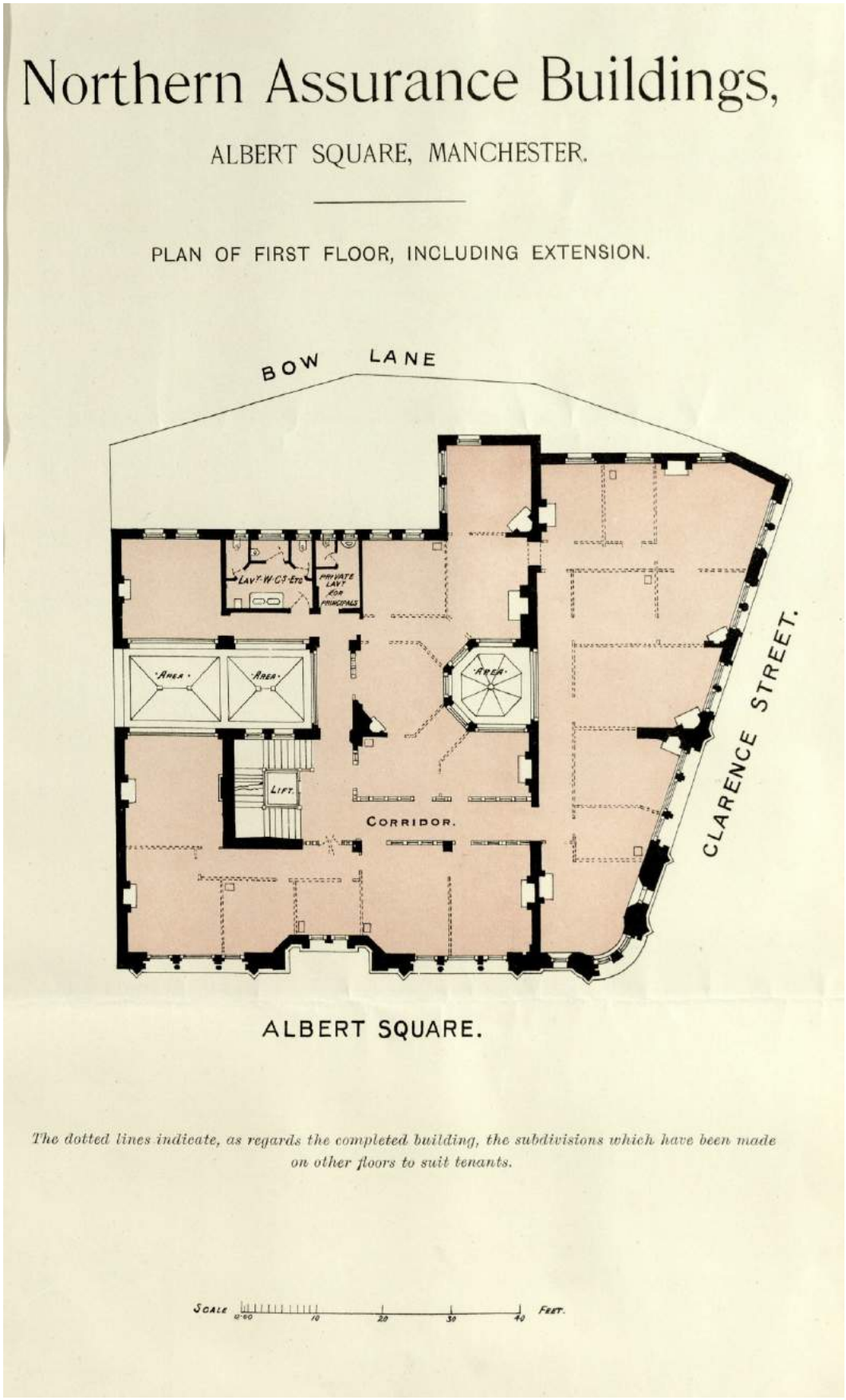


Figure 2.3: Northern Assurance Buildings, Brochure First Floor

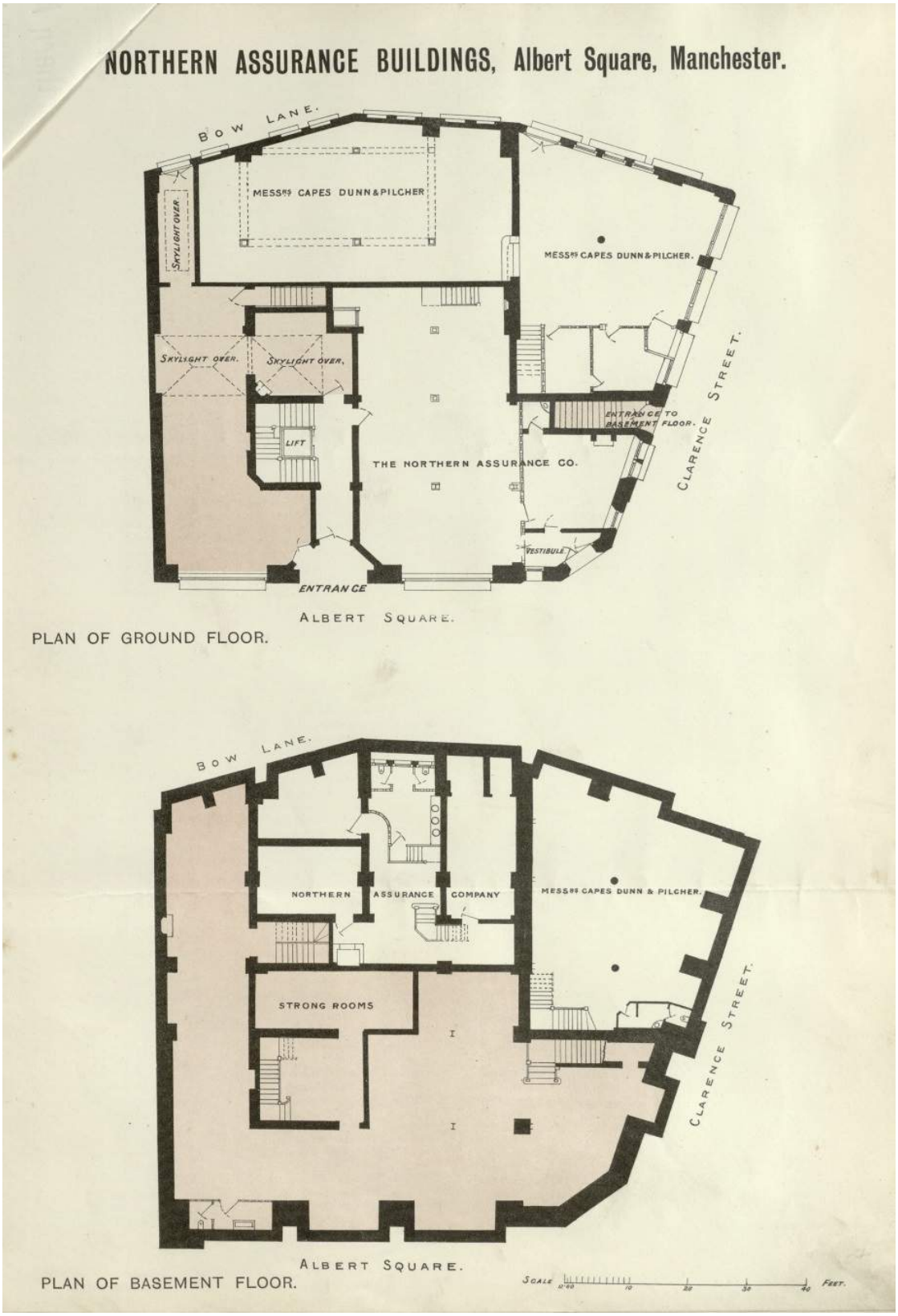


Figure 2.4: Northern Assurance Building Brochure, basement and ground floor



Figure 2.5: Northern Assurance Building from Albert Square, 1948[5]



Figure 2.6: Northern Assurance Building from Albert Square, 2015

[5] Manchester Central Library

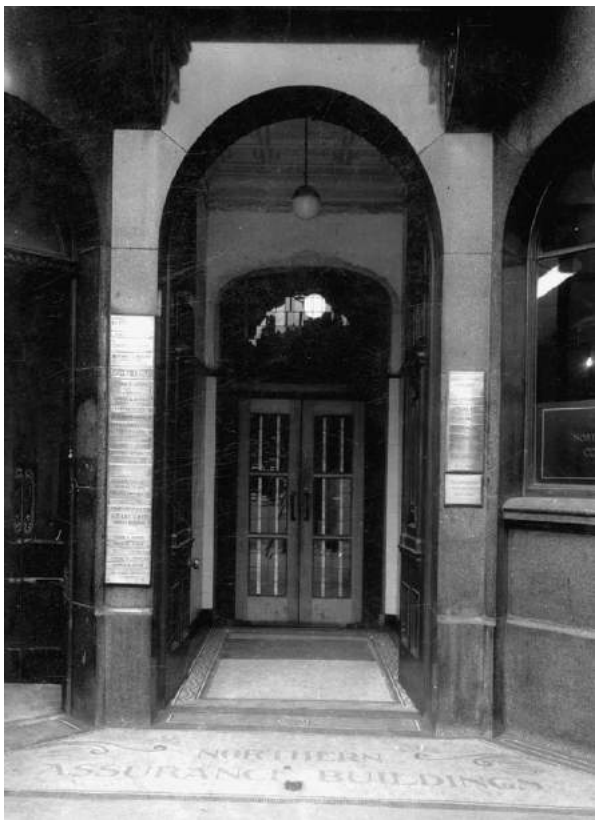


Figure 2.7: Princess Street Entrance, 1948[6]



Figure 2.8: Princess Street Entrance, 1988[7]

[6] Manchester Central Library
[7] Manchester Central Library



Figure 2.9: Princess Street Entrance, 2015

3. Assessment of Significance

Significance and Special Interest

3.1 The NPPF defines the significance of a heritage asset as:

"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.[8]"

3.2 This section assesses the significance of the Northern Assurance Building in terms of its special architectural and historic interest. The Historic England listing guidance for commerce and exchange buildings[9] provides additional attributes that may contribute to the special interest of commercial buildings. These have also been taken into consideration in the assessment of significance below:

- Selectivity/date/rarity
- Group Value
- Alterations/authenticity
- Interiors
- Signage
- Community Interest

Assessment

3.3 Northern Assurance Building is listed at grade II and is described in the list entry description as follows:

Includes: No.8 CLARENCE STREET. Shops and offices. 1902, by Waddington, Son and Dunkerley; slightly altered. Probably iron-framed, with cladding of sandstone ashlar and some grey granite, steeply pitched slate roofs on several levels. Irregular plan on corner site. Elaborate building in eclectic style with French Renaissance accent. Mostly 5 storeys and attic, but with return side to Clarence Street partly 3 storeys and attic; principal facade of 3 wide bays (windows of 3, 2 and 3 lights) plus a broad curved corner, symmetrical except for this. Panelled frieze over ground floor (interrupted by central entrance arch), 1st and 2nd floors in French Renaissance style with superimposed triangular pilasters surmounted by ball finials, and enriched panels between floors, the centre feature rising to the 3rd floor and finished as a balustrade parapet with ball finials, the outer bays at 3rd and 4th floors recessed and the heads bridged by semi-circular arches with pierced spandrels, string-course over 4th floor with egg-and-dart enrichment, attic windows under richly decorated shaped gables, that in

[8] DCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012 – Annex 2: Glossary
[9] English Heritage (2011) Listing Selection Guide, Commerce and Exchange Buildings

the centre 2-tiered and flanked by octagonal turrets; curved corner similarly treated and finished as a cylindrical turret which has domed roof with corona and finial, flanked by similar turrets. Central round-headed doorway recessed in a giant round-headed arch which has a 2-light window under the head. Sashed windows without glazing bars, those at 1st and 2nd floors, in centre of 3rd floor, and central gable all recessed behind colonnaded screens; mullion-and-transom windows at 3rd and 4th floors, mullioned windows to attic. Similar fenestration to the corner. Return side to Clarence Street smaller and simpler.

Architectural Interest

Waddington, Son and Dunkerley

3.4 The architectural partnership of Waddington, Son and Dunkerley was formed around 1900 and therefore the Northern Assurance Building would have been one of their first commissions as a practice. William Waddington (senior) had died almost a decade earlier, but his son, William Angelo, had continued to practice under the name William Wadding and Son for several years. Waddington and Son had been responsible for a very large number of schools and chapels for the Wesleyan Methodists across South Lancashire.[10]

3.5 In addition to the Northern Assurance Building, major schemes by Waddington, Son and Dunkerley included the Wesleyan Central Hall, Sheffield (grade II) and St Mary's Church, Nelson, Lancashire (grade II). The firm was asked to submit designs for the Manchester New Infirmary in Oxford Road and the new Stock Exchange, but was unsuccessful. The partnership was dissolved in January 1906 and William Angelo Waddington died a year later.

3.6 Both architects travelled extensively across Europe; in France, Italy, Germany and Spain; and this is likely to have influenced their architecture such as the "French Renaissance Accent" referred to in the list entry for the Northern Assurance Building. Following the end of the partnership Dunkerley had further success independently; he became President of the Manchester Society of Architects 1914-1916 and designs for his own houses were featured in the British Architect and Country Life. His obituary categorises Dunkerley as being:

"one of that group of traditionalists such as Voysey, Baillie-Scott and Dawber, not to mention Lutyens, who dealt with each problem sympathetically with its surroundings and made such good use of local materials.[11]"

Exterior

3.7 The Northern Assurance Building is a sandstone and grey granite clad building occupying a corner plot at the junction of Princess Street and Clarence Street on Albert Square. As previously identified, the building was constructed in two phases. The first phase 9-19 Princess Street is symmetrical and highly decorated. It is five storeys with an attic, over a ground floor and basement. 21 Princess Street prominently occupies the corner and is surmounted by a cylindrical domed turret. The Clarence Street elevation is more restrained and steps down to three stories.

[10] www.scottisharchitects.org.uk
[11] RIBA Journal v58, 1851, p482

3.8 The building façade is highly elaborate and the style is eclectic. Its principal features include; its corner cylindrical turret and dome, gables, octagonal turrets, panelled friezes, semi-circular stone arches with pierced spandrels, ball finials, corbels and classical capitals. The building has retained the majority of its timber sash windows.

3.9 The list entry identifies the style as French Renaissance whereas "*Manchester – an Architectural History*[12]" describes it as being in a "*Free, Flemish style*". In essence it is an eclectic mix of European styles which appears somewhat at odds with the description of Dunkerley's work in his obituary.

3.10 The building's style is strikingly different to the Italian and English gothic of other buildings framing Albert Square after the construction of the Town Hall. The North West Civic Trust's 1987 "*Guide Across Manchester*" asserts that it is "*the only building to challenge the Town Hall by its size and elaborate decoration.*[13]"

3.11 Photographs from the 1950s show large individual metal letters spelling 'Northern Assurance Buildings' across the Princess Street elevation between the second and third floors. It is unclear whether this signage was original to the building, and it has subsequently been removed. Signage identifying the building as 'The Northern Assurance Buildings' remains in situ either side of the main entrance and there is an engraved granite panel above the entrance. This signage is of value in signposting the original use.

3.12 As previously mentioned, the ground floor frontage was intended to be altered according to the needs of the tenants and the alterations to the shop fronts have had a negligible impact on the character of the listed building. The original main door has been replaced; however the current door may replicate parts of an original design.

3.13 The rear elevation is constructed of red brick and white glazed tile bricks. It is plain, with minimal architectural detailing and, although it retains its original sash windows, overall it is of low architectural interest.

3.14 Previous alterations to the exterior of the building are relatively minor and overall the exterior of the building is well preserved and retains a high degree of its original architectural character and interest. The former use of the Northern Assurance Building remains legible and the building is of high value as a Victorian commercial building with a strong presence onto Albert Square.

Interior

3.15 As noted in the listing guidance for commercial and exchange buildings: "*Commercial premises are intrinsically prone to change and alteration, and cannot be expected to survive in their original configuration*[14]" and this is reflected in the low survival of interior features and fittings in the Northern Assurance Building. There is limited information available about the original interior of the building. The following section has therefore been informed by the limited photographs available of the entrance lobby, the c1902

[12] Parkinson-Bailey, John, J. (2000) Manchester – An Architectural History

[13] Atkins, P (1987) Guide Across Manchester (NW Civic Trust)

[14] English Heritage (2011) Listing Selection Guide, Commerce and Exchange Buildings

brochure for the building and an on-site visual assessment of the extant features and fittings.

3.16 As shown in Figs 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9, the entrance lobby has been altered through the removal of the leaded light archway, tiles and skirting, any original lighting and the original door. Historic research indicates that originally this space had an archway between the entrance doors and the lifts; the top portion of which was glazed with leaded lights and that there may not have been an interior door. The space would therefore have been less enclosed and the changes that have taken place have diminished the sense of arrival of this principal entrance into the building. The extant design scheme for the entrance lobby dates to 2002 (ref: 062577/LO/CITY1/01) and 2008 (085408/LO/2007/C1) and retains only the plaster ceiling and potentially mosaic tiling under the carpet surface. Consequently the entrance lobby makes a very limited contribution to the special interest of the listed building.

3.17 Although the c1902 plans for the building show a lift, the extant lift is not consistent with the age of the building and is a later addition of little contribution to the special interest of the building. The lift lobby has been extensively altered with the infilling of doorways and addition of panelling which is in a Georgian classical style and is not of special interest (see Fig 3.1).



Figure 3.1: Ground floor lift lobby

3.18 The staircase appears historic, as are the vertical corner columns which have a distinctive chamfer (Fig 3.2); a motif used elsewhere in the building. The handrails are later additions, and much of the skirting has been replaced with an MDF replica Victorian skirting. Between the fifth and attic floor there is a section of what appears to be original balustrading and handrail.



Figure 3.2: Staircase between ground floor and first floor



Figure 3.3: Handrails between ground and first floors



Figure 3.4: Staircase to attic floor

3.19 On the upper floors, access to the lavatories from the staircase have been blocked and doorways in-filled leaving just one doorway into the offices on each level. As a result of these changes in the stairwell, areas of coving are discontinuous and surviving sections are limited. Elsewhere across the building there are small isolated areas of intact coving.



Figure 3.5: Remnant of coving on first floor stair landing

3.20 Tall windows light the main staircase from a light well. The window surrounds are original, however in places the junctures between the timber pilasters, which frame the windows, and original mouldings are crude. It is not clear whether these pilasters are later additions or have been poorly repaired (see Figs 3.6 and 3.7).

3.21 Metal frames have been inserted into the timber window surrounds. The frames are utilitarian and are not consistent with the quality and detail of the moulded window surrounds (see Fig 3.7). The glazing has also been replaced with reeded obscure glazing. The glazing only appears to have been chosen to obscure views into the light well and is not prismatic reeded glass, which would have increased light into the stairwell. The same glass has been inserted into a limited number of other light well windows across the building; which confirms that it is not original. The metal frames and glazing appear post-war and may have been inserted as part of a c1948 refurbishment of the building. The metal frames and obscure glazing are therefore concluded to be later additions, which are not consistent with the architectural character and quality of the original parts of the windows and are therefore not considered to contribute to the building's significance.

3.22 As previously mentioned, the offices were intended to be sub-divided to meet tenant requirements and there is minimal survival of historic features. The octagonal light well creates a feature of interest on floors one to five. The majority of the original timber window surrounds have been retained and there are some limited areas of surviving coving within the office spaces. At attic level, the trusses are exposed which adds architectural character and an understanding of the building's structure (Fig 3.10). A number of dormer windows and a roof-top extension have been inserted into the rear roof pitch to extend the attic space.

3.23 There has been a high degree of internal alteration resulting from successive refurbishment of the building's interior to reflect current styles. Surviving original features; which are the plaster ceiling in the entrance lobby, the octagonal light well, staircase, exposed trusses in the attic, joinery and mouldings, contribute to the architectural interest of the building. However, this contribution is limited by the dispersal and limited extent of surviving features and the lack of a coherent historic interior. Subsequent alterations, including those made in the mid-20th century, have diminished the architectural and historic character of the building's interior and are not consistent with surviving original features in quality and style. These later alterations and additions are therefore not considered to be of special interest.

3.24 Overall, it is concluded that, by virtue of the extent of internal alterations and limited features of architectural interest, the interior of the Northern Assurance Buildings makes a low contribution to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building. The architectural interest is primarily in the scale and grandeur of the external elevations which, unlike the interior, has a high degree of intactness.



Figure 3.6: Juncture between pilaster and window surround between first and second floor



Figure 3.7: Juncture between pilaster and skirting between first and second floor



Figure 3.8: Stair windows (photograph taken across light well)



Figure 3.9: Office space, First Floor



Figure 3.10: Attic Floor

Historic Interest

3.25 The historic interest of the building is largely attributed to it being illustrative of the redevelopment of this part of Manchester in the late 19th to early 20th centuries; as the city's commerce grew.

3.26 Waddington, Son and Dunkerley were not an architectural practice of great note and are not considered to have been influential. Therefore their association with the building makes a limited contribution to its historic interest.

3.27 There is a blue plaque on the building indicating that Edward Schunck, a scientist who researched natural fibres, dyes and pigments, was born at 11 Princess Street. As this relates to a previous building on the site, which was demolished for the construction of the Northern Assurance Building, this historic association does not add to the special historic interest of the listed building.

3.28 It is therefore concluded that the historic interest of the Northern Assurance Building is limited and, as set out above, its special interest lies primarily in its architectural interest.

Group Value

3.29 The Northern Assurance Building has group value as one of a number of prominent commercial office buildings from this period which flank Albert Square. The quality of the elevations fronting the square and nearby streets contributes to the grandeur of the square and character and appearance of the Albert Square Conservation Area.

Summary of Special Interest

3.30 In summary, the significance of the Northern Assurance Building is ascribed to:

- The elaborate and eclectic external elevations to Albert Square, which are well conserved and retain their historic architectural character.

- By contrast the interior has been heavily and successively altered and surviving historic fabric is limited and dispersed across the building, resulting in no coherent historic interior scheme.

- The group value with neighbouring buildings fronting Albert Square which, although of varied architectural style and materiality, enclose the square.

Albert Square Conservation Area

3.31 The conservation area is centred on Albert Square and the Town Hall (grade I listed); the focus of Manchester's civic spaces. By the late 18th century, much of the present street pattern had been established, although the majority of Georgian buildings have since been replaced. The town hall was completed in 1877. Many of the buildings which enclose Albert Square were built during the late 19th century and most survive today. The circular library, designed by Vincent E. Harris, was completed in 1934, followed by the town hall extension; also by Harris. A number of sculptures and statues have been located in Albert Square and the surrounding vicinity; including the Albert Memorial (grade I listed).

3.32 Manchester City Council identifies the main characteristic of the Albert Square Conservation Area as its civic grandeur; whilst also noting that it contains many commercial properties and small-scale buildings[15]. The buildings facing onto Albert Square enclose the townscape and are of varied architectural style and materials including gothic, classical and modern as well as brick, granite and sandstone. The conservation area was originally intended to include the immediate surroundings of Albert Square and the Town Hall, although it was extended in 1985 to create comprehensive coverage of the city's Victorian core.

3.33 The Northern Assurance Building forms part of the enclosing townscape around Albert Square. The quality of its elevations onto the square is representative of the surrounding buildings; although its eclectic style is more unique. It contributes to the historic interest of the conservation area as a commercial building which continues in its original intended use. The scale and grandeur of the building is illustrative of the commercial importance of this part of the city during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

3.34 Due to the minor nature and extent of the proposed external works, the visual impact of the proposed development will be very limited meaning there will be no impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. Therefore the impact on the Albert Square Conservation Area has not been considered further within this report.

[15] www.manchester.gov.uk

4. Assessment of Impact

Introduction

4.1 The following section assesses the impact of the Proposed Works on the special architectural and historic interest (the significance) of the listed building. The relevant heritage legislation, policy and guidance context for consideration of the Proposed Development is set out in full in Appendix 4. This includes the statutory duties set out in s16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national policy set out in the NPPF and local policy for the historic environment, as well as other national guidance.

Proposed Works

4.2 Listed building consent is sought for:

"new glazed entrance doors, the internal refurbishment of the ground floor and common areas including lifts, the toilet accommodation, the office accommodation and a new plant area to be located to the rear of the building at 5th floor level"

4.3 Full planning permission is also sought for:

"new glazed entrance doors and a new plant area to be located to the rear of the building at 5th floor level"

4.4 The LJ Partnership is proposing a package of mainly interior works which together with the installation of improved servicing is intended to make the building more attractive to tenants; thereby supporting the future use of the building and continuing the office use for which it was originally built.

4.5 This package of works comprises:

- The insertion of a new glazed entrance door to Princess Street (the main entrance); retaining the existing door in situ and fixed open behind.
- A plant deck with acoustic screening on the 5th floor to the rear of the building.
- Refurbishment of the ground floor lobby and lift.
- Refurbishment of the staircase, the replacement of reeded (frosted) glazing with clear glazing within the stairwell windows and redecoration.
- Refurbishment of office accommodation to include; new suspended ceiling and bulkheads to replace existing, reconfiguration of lavatories, new lighting scheme, reopening of some boarded up windows, reinstating corridor link between the lift lobby and lavatories on each floor, and redecoration.

Pre-application Consultation

4.6 A pre-application meeting was held between OBI Property and Manchester City Council's Conservation Officer on 29 September 2015 to discuss the emerging proposals.

Assessment

4.7 Proposed external works are limited to the addition of a glazed entrance door to the Princess Street (main) elevation and the creation of a plant deck to the rear of the building at floor 5.

4.8 The entrance door will be constructed from lightweight glazing and the existing c1994 timber doors will be retained and secured in an open position. Whilst the timber doors are recent additions and of limited interest, they have been carefully designed to reflect the period of the building and may replicate an earlier door design. The proposed solution addresses the applicant's desire for a clear line of sight into the building's lobby whilst retaining the traditional door arrangement. The detailed design of the door, its interface with the building's elevation and the existing door and the method of fixing and installation can be regulated by condition.

4.9 The proposed plant deck is located to the rear of the building. As previously identified the rear elevation is the least significant elevation and contributes little to the architectural interest of the listed building. Accordingly, the proposed location is the least intrusive and the plant will be seen within the context of existing servicing on this and neighbouring buildings. The impact on the significance of the building will therefore be low. The proposed screening will further mitigate against the visual impact of the plant; the details of which can be agreed through condition.

4.10 As identified in Sections 2 and 3, the ground floor lobby has experienced successive change. Historic plans of the building show no door between the building's entrance and the stair where there is currently a timber glazed door c1994 in date. The existing, heavy timber door darkens the lobby and separates the two historically united spaces. Replacing this with a glazed door will go some way to reinstating the visual link between the two spaces and the legibility of the historic plan; whilst also providing the occupants with a secure and warm lobby area.

4.11 The replacement of the current decorative and lighting schemes, which are not of special interest, will have a neutral impact on the significance of the building. The plan form of the ground floor lobby will not be altered.

4.12 As previously identified, the lift appears to be a later addition and makes little contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the listed building. It is proposed to refurbish the lift to meet modern health and safety standards and as part of the updated interior design scheme. Although the changes to the lift with reduce the ability to date the lift, the lift is part of the building's successive change and does not constitute an important phase in the building's history.

4.13 Section 3 identified that surviving historic features within the staircase area are limited and those which do survive are piecemeal and dispersed. The staircase is to be

retained and refurbished with new oak treads and handrails. Non-original doors to each office suite from the lift will be replaced and the existing riser doors will be retained and repainted and new handles attached. The reeded (frosted) glazing is proposed to be replaced with clear glazing. As previously identified, the staircase windows were altered around the mid-20th century and are not consistent with the high quality of the original finishes of the building. The alterations are part of successive changes to the building, and do not constitute an important phase in the building's history.

4.14 As detailed in Section 3, the office accommodation has been substantially altered and modernised. Existing suspended ceilings and bulk heads are required to house the servicing needs to upgrade the office accommodation and will also house lighting. Although some areas of historic features including coving survive, these are dispersed across the building. Historic features will be retained including the octagonal light well which will be cleaned and refurbished. Where historic features are exposed during the works they will either be incorporated into the design scheme or where this is not they will be retained in situ and re-concealed within replacement suspended ceilings. Although some opening up work has been undertaken, the full extent of this part of the works is unknown at this stage. It is recommended that an appropriate method statement for opening up, recording features and agreeing detailed interventions is agreed through a condition to the listed building consent.

4.15 The lavatories have been previously reconfigured and modernised and will be upgraded again as part of the proposed works. They will remain in approximately their historic position at the rear of the building.

4.16 Reopening the corridor between the lift lobby and toilets on each floor will reinstate this part of the historic plan. As part of the works, a small number of windows which have previously been plaster-boarded over will be reopened.

Summary of Impact

4.17 The proposed works to the exterior are limited in scale and nature and will have a negligible impact on the scale and grandeur of the Albert Square elevations, which principally contribute to the significance of the listed building. The works are primarily confined to the interior of the building which, as previously established has undergone successive alteration and makes a low contribution to the significance of the listed building. The proposed suspended ceiling and lighting will replace existing modern systems. Elements of the building's fabric which will be affected by the proposed works include a c1994 entrance door and door between the entrance lobby and lift lobby (also c1994), a mid-20th century lift and mid-20th century reeded (frosted) glazing which are part of the building's successive change and are not features of special architectural interest. Whilst the staircase will be altered as part of the proposed works, as demonstrated in Section 3, much of its historic character has been lost and surviving sections of historic fabric are piecemeal. The proposed works also include the refurbishment of the light well and reinstatement of a corridor link between the lift lobbies and lavatories, which will have slight beneficial impacts.

4.18 When the significance of the building, which principally resides in the external elevations to Albert Square, and the extent of previous alteration to the interior of the building are considered, together with the limited nature of the proposed works; it is concluded that

the proposed development will preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

Statutory Duties and the NPPF

4.19 The statutory duties of s16(2) and s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the special interest of a listed building is a matter which should be accorded considerable importance and weight.

4.20 One of core land-use planning principles set out in the NPPF (paragraph 17) is that planning should:

"conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations."

4.21 Conservation is defined by the NPPF as the process of maintaining and managing change to heritage assets in ways that sustain, and where appropriate enhance their significance. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable use consistent with their conservation (paragraph 131).

4.22 The NPPF also requires that great weight is given to the conservation of designated heritage assets (paragraph 132) and this reflects the statutory duties of the 1990 Act with respect to listed buildings.

4.23 The Proposed Works intend to enable a grade II listed building to be brought back into full and sustainable occupation. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposals will result in the loss of some historic fabric, the loss is minor and limited to those parts of the building where there has already been extensive alteration. Considering, the low significance of the interior of the building and its already altered state, it is concluded that on balance this minor loss of historic fabric does not harm the significance of the listed building.

Local Planning Policy Considerations

4.24 Policy DC19.1 of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan states that "*the Council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings and to protecting their general setting*." The policy continues by stating that "*the Council will not permit any external or internal alteration or addition to a listed building where, in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character.*" This Heritage Statement concludes that, on balance, there is no harm caused to the significance of the listed building as a result of the proposed works.

4.25 Policy CC9 of the Manchester Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, states that development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance heritage assets and new development must support the range of uses the Council expects in the City Centre. Policy EN3 states that "*Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage*

assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset." The Proposed Works are consistent with Policies CCP and EN3 in enabling the reuse of vacant parts of the Northern Assurance Building whilst preserving the key elements which contribute to its significance; the exterior elevations onto Princess Street and Clarence Street.

5. Conclusions

5.1 LJ Partnership have recently acquired the Northern Assurance Building, a grade II listed Victorian office building, together with two additional grade II listed office buildings on Albert Square. It is seeking to undertake a modest programme of interior works and the installation of air conditioning units, with the intention of bringing vacant floor space back into sustainable and viable use. This will continue the historic office use, for which the building was designed and built.

5.2 The significance of the Northern Assurance Building resides primarily in its elaborate elevations to Albert Square on Princess Street and Clarence Street. The interior of the building has undergone extensive and successive alteration with very limited survival of original features and makes a low contribution to the special interest of the listed building.

5.3 The Proposed Works comprise new glazed entrance doors, the internal refurbishment of the ground floor and common areas including lifts, the toilet accommodation, the office accommodation and a new plant area to be located to the rear of the building at 5th floor level. When the significance of the building, which principally resides in the external elevations to Albert Square, and the extent of previous and successive alterations to the interior of the building are considered, together with the limited nature of the proposed works; it is concluded that the proposed development will preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

5.4 The proposals will sustain the scale and grandeur of the elevations fronting Albert Square and the group value it has with the neighbouring buildings in the conservation area. The works will bring the building back into sustainable commercial use; it's original and intended use.

5.5 The proposed works are therefore in accordance with the statutory duties of s16(2) and s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF, Policy DC19.1 of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan and Policy CC9 of the Manchester Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy.

Appendix 1: List Entry

NORTHERN ASSURANCE BUILDING

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: NORTHERN ASSURANCE BUILDING

List entry Number: 1270910

Location

8, CLARENCE STREET
NORTHERN ASSURANCE BUILDING, 9-21, PRINCESS STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Manchester

District Type: Metropolitan Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 03-Oct-1974

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 456069

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details
MANCHESTER

SJ8398SE PRINCESS STREET 698-1/27/321 (North East side) 03/10/74 Nos.9 TO 21 (Odd) Northern Assurance Buildings

GV II

Includes: No.8 CLARENCE STREET. Shops and offices. 1902, by Waddington, Son and Dunkerley; slightly altered. Probably iron-framed, with cladding of sandstone ashlar and some grey granite, steeply pitched slate roofs on several levels. Irregular plan on corner site. Elaborate building in eclectic style with French Renaissance accent. Mostly 5 storeys and attic, but with return side to Clarence Street partly 3 storeys and attic; principal facade of 3 wide bays (windows of 3, 2 and 3 lights) plus a broad curved corner, symmetrical except for this. Panelled frieze over ground floor (interrupted by central entrance arch), 1st and 2nd floors in French Renaissance style with superimposed triangular pilasters surmounted by ball finials, and enriched panels between floors, the centre feature rising to the 3rd floor and finished as a balustrade parapet with ball finials, the outer bays at 3rd and 4th floors recessed and the heads bridged by semi-circular arches with pierced spandrels, string-course over 4th floor with egg-and-dart enrichment, attic windows under richly decorated shaped gables, that in the centre 2-tiered and flanked by octagonal turrets; curved corner similarly treated and finished as a cylindrical turret which has domed roof with corona and finial, flanked by similar turrets. Central round-headed doorway recessed in a giant round-headed arch which has a 2-light window under the head. Sashed windows without glazing bars, those at 1st and 2nd floors, in centre of 3rd floor, and central gable all recessed behind colonnaded screens; mullion-and-transom windows at 3rd and 4th floors, mullioned windows to attic. Similar fenestration to the corner. Return side to Clarence Street smaller and simpler.

Listing NGR: SJ8387298182

Selected Sources
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: SJ 83872 98182

Map



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Appendix 2: Northern Assurance Building Brochure (1902)

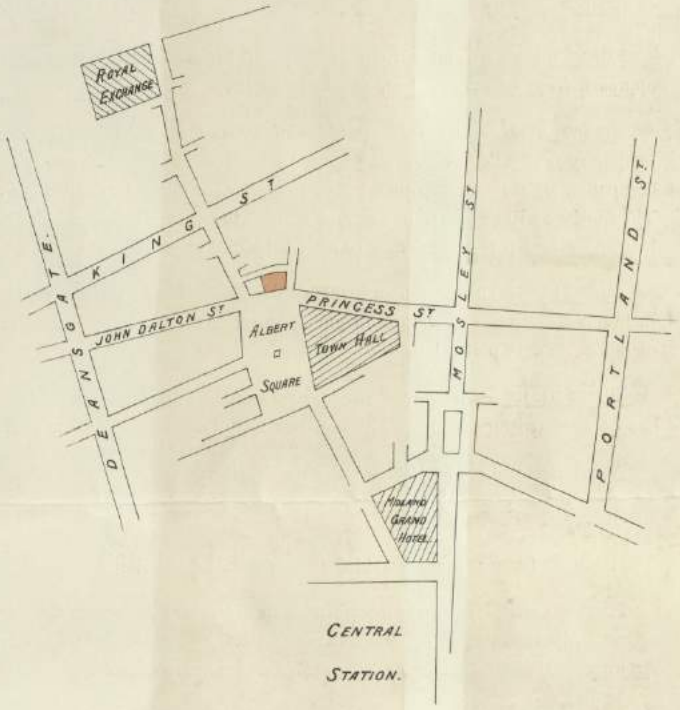
To Public Companies, Accountants, Architects, Barristers, Engineers, Estate Agents, Manufacturers, Merchants, Solicitors, and others.

OFFICES TO BE LET

IN

Northern Assurance Buildings,

ALBERT SQUARE, MANCHESTER.



Northern Assurance Buildings,

Albert Square, Manchester.

THIS new building is now completed, subject only to the arrangement of the unlet portions, which will be subdivided by partition walls to suit the requirements of tenants.

The extension at corner of Albert Square and Clarence Street is in course of erection.

Basement.—The front portion of fireproof basement will have a separate approach from Clarence Street, and is to be let.

Ground Floor.—The front portion of ground floor, which is now in temporary occupation of Messrs. Capes, Dunn & Pilcher, will be available for occupation by a Bank, or other Public Company, or by a Professional Firm. The frontage will be altered in a manner suitable to the requirements. The basement floor, or a part thereof, may be included with this tenancy, if desired.

First Floor.—The first floor, which covers about 310 square yards, or, including the extension, about 470 square yards, is divided into separate suites of offices, and is partly let.

Upper Floors.—On some of the upper floors large or small suites of offices can be arranged for tenants. The top floor is suitable for a Drawing Office.

A passenger lift is provided. Electric lighting.

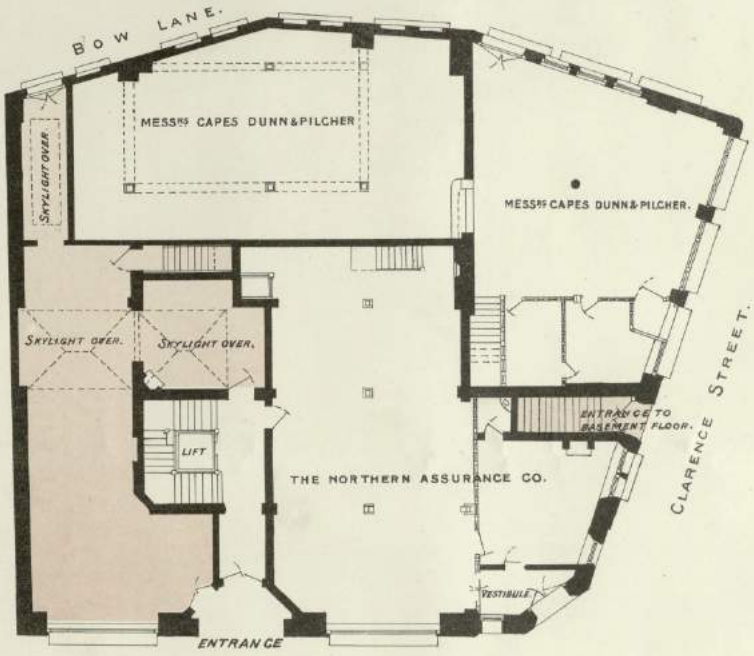
Strong-rooms if required.

Excellent lavatories are provided throughout the building.

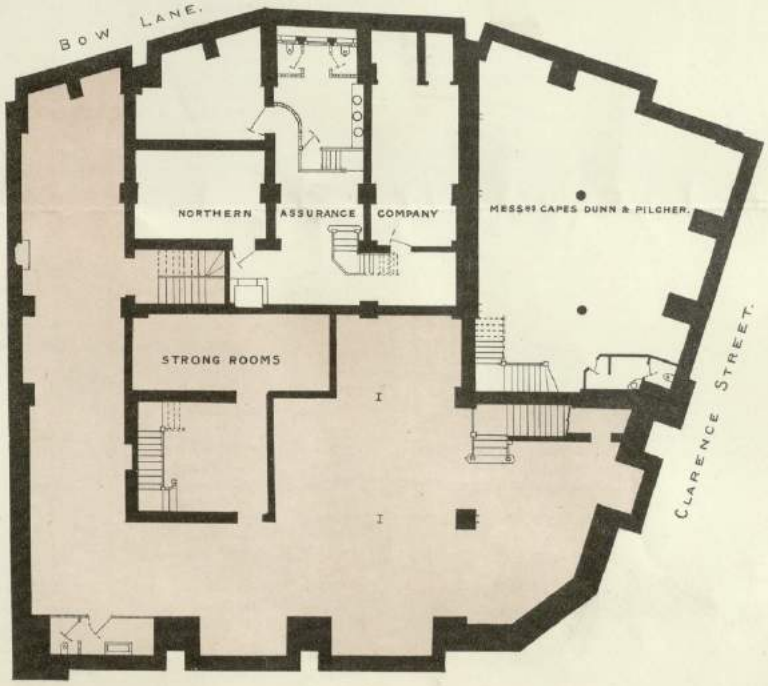
Further particulars can be obtained at the Northern Assurance Company's Offices, Albert Square; or, from Messrs. Waddington, Son & Dunkerley, Architects, Mansfield Chambers, St. Ann's Square, Manchester.

NORTHERN ASSURANCE COMPANY,
Albert Square, Manchester.

NORTHERN ASSURANCE BUILDINGS, Albert Square, Manchester.



PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR.



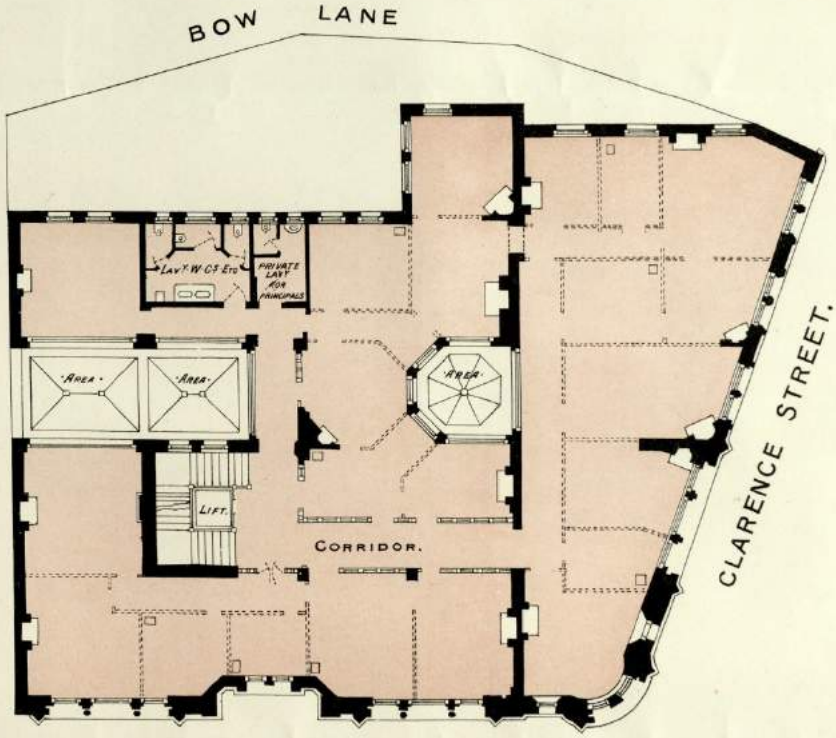
PLAN OF BASEMENT FLOOR.

SCALE 0 10 20 30 40 FEET.

Northern Assurance Buildings,

ALBERT SQUARE, MANCHESTER.

PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR, INCLUDING EXTENSION.



ALBERT SQUARE.

The dotted lines indicate, as regards the completed building, the subdivisions which have been made on other floors to suit tenants.

SCALE 0 10 20 30 40 FEET.

Appendix 3: Planning and Building Control History

Reference	Planning, LBC or building control application	Description	Date of determination	Determination
107500/FO/2014/C1 107501/LO/2014/C1	Planning /listed building consent	External alterations at ground floor, and the installation of external lighting.	23 Oct 2015	Approved
096700/FO/2011/C1 095934/LO/2011/C1	Planning/listed building consent	Elevational alterations to ground floor of Clarence Street frontage including removal of revolving doors and making good of existing doorway with timber screen and door to match existing.	29 Jun 2011	Approved
090176/FO/2009/C1 090177/LO/2009/C1	Planning/listed building consent	Change of use and conversion of existing retail unit to a restaurant with ancillary bar	26 May 2009	Approved
RG/04/45861	Building control	Internal alterations	2004	Approved
107502/AO/2014/C1	Planning	Installation of 2no. externally Illuminated menu boards, 1no. illuminated plaque sign and 1no. projecting hanging sign.	23 Oct 2015 Date approved	Approved
099378/LO/2012/C1	Listed building consent	Listed building consent to attach fixing bolts to support overhead line equipment associated with the proposed tramway extension	30 Sep 2013	Approved
096700/FO/2011/C1	Planning	Elevational alterations to ground floor of Clarence Street frontage including removal of revolving doors and making good of existing doorway with timber screen and door to match existing.	15 Sep 2011	Approved
095934/LO/2011/C1	Listed building consent	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT for removal of internal walls to form single restaurant, introduction of partitions to form kitchen, private dining area and disabled W.C and external alterations incorporating replacement of existing door and	15 Sep 2011	Approved

		surround.		
091596/FO/2009/C1	Planning	Use of pavement area for outside tables and chairs in association with and ancillary to the Ego Restaurant use within Northern Assurance	02 Mar 2010	Approved
090178/AO/2009/C1	Planning	Proposed erection of fascia signs, projecting signs, vinyl window graphics and menu boxes	14 Aug 2009	Approved
090176/FO/2009/C1	Planning	Change of use and conversion of existing retail unit to a restaurant with ancillary bar	26 May 2009	Approved
090177/LO/2009/C1	Listed building consent	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT for change of use and conversion of existing retail unit to a restaurant with ancillary bar, including external signs and menu boxes	14 Aug 2009	Approved
089256/LO/2009/C1	Listed building consent	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT refurbishment and extension of existing building including alterations to a lightwell and removal of roof at rear of premises to provide upgraded and new office accommodation	14 May 2009	Approved
089255/FO/2009/C1	Planning	Extension of building at third, fourth and fifth floors, to provide office accommodation	14 May 2009	Approved
085408/LO/2007/C1	Listed building consent	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT for the installation of an internal flue and internal alterations at ground floor lobby area	15 Dec 2008	Approved
45861/0412	Building control	Alterations to offices	November 2004	Approved
062577/LO/CITY1/01	Listed building consent	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT Refurbishment of lobby including replacement of non-original features with reproduction period panelling	15 Jun 2002	Approved
061098/FU/CITY1/01	Planning	Change of use of part ground floor and part basement from A1 use to A3 use	29 Mar 2001	Approved
061099/LO/CITY1/01	Planning	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT Internal and external alterations including: installation of goods	01 Feb 2002	Approved

		hoist; removal and replacement of shopfront to Clarence Street elevation, removal of window (corner of Princess Street / Clarence Street) and installation of new door; remove and replace doors (Clarence Street elevation); remove brick infills (Bow Lane elevation) and replace with glass block panels; repairs and alterations to roof lights; removal and replacement of ventilation ducts.		
047752/LO/CITY1/95 / 047751/FO/CITY1/95	Planning/Listed building consent	Single storey roof top office extension	12 Jul 1995	Approved
046480/AO/CITY1/94	Planning	1 non-illuminated projecting shop sign	24 Nov 1994	Approved
045679/LO/CITY1/94	Listed building consent	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT reduction of stall risers and minor facade detail alterations	14 Jul 1994	Approved
045678/FO/CITY1/94	Planning	Alterations to entrance doors and stall risers	14 Jul 1994	Approved
044038/LO/CITY1/93	Listed building consent	Renewal of mosaic floor to entrance	08 Sep 1993	Approved
042352	Planning	Change of use of part of ground floor and part of basement from class A1 to class A2	20 Nov 1992	Approved
036554	Planning	Change of use of part of basement to offices, trade counter and storage	15 Jun 1990	Approved
F/AD01852	Planning	Illuminated single sided box sign suspended behind window on Princess Street elevation of Travel Agents.	01 Nov 1978	Approved

Appendix 4: Legislation and Planning Policy

Statutory Duties

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides that listed building consent is required for:

> *'(s.7) … any works for the demolition of a listed building or for its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest …'*

In determining such applications the following duty is placed on the decision maker:

> *'s.16 (2) In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority, or as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'*

Similarly in determining planning applications affecting a listed building, the decision maker:

> *S66(1) shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*

In relation to conservation areas, the following duty is placed on the decision maker:

> *'s72(1) special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'*

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out a set of core land-use planning principles which should underpin plan-making and decision-taking. One of these principles is that planning should:

> *"conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations."*

Chapter 12 contains policies regarding the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

The NPPF defines 'significance' in respect of heritage policy as:

> *"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.*

Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."[16]

Paragraph 128 outlines the information required to support planning applications affecting heritage assets. It states that applicants should provide a description of the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Paragraph 129 states that:

"Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal…They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."

Paragraph 131 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of (amongst other things) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable use consistent with their conservation.

Paragraph 132 confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. It also confirms that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraphs 133 and 134 of the NPPF differentiate between 'substantial harm' and 'less than substantial harm'. Paragraph 134 states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Local Planning Policy

Manchester Unitary Development Plan 1995 (Extant Policies)

Policy DC18.1 states that the Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals within Conservation Areas. It will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering the following issues:

i) the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces;

ii) the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings;

iii) the desirability of retaining existing features, such as boundary walls, gardens, trees, (including street trees);

iv) the effect of signs and advertisements;

16 DCLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Annex 2: Glossary

v) any further guidance on specific areas which has been approved by the Council.

Policy DC19.1 states that in determining applications for listed building consent or planning applications for development involving or having an impact on buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the Council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings and to protecting their general setting. In giving effect to this policy, the Council will not permit any external or internal alteration or addition to a listed building where, in its opinion, there would be an adverse effect on its architectural or historic character. It will also not permit alterations to a listed building which would prevent the future use of any part of the building, in particular upper floors or basements, or where poor maintenance is likely to result.

Manchester Local Development Framework (LDF)

Core Strategy (2012)

Policy CC9 states that development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments. New development must support the range of uses the Council expects in the City Centre and contribute to a coherent and integrated physical environment.

Policy EN1 states that within the City Centre Character Area (1), developers will be expected to consider the City's heritage and continue the rich pattern of activity in the core area.

Policy EN 3 states that throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre. New developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains. Proposals which enable the re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset.

Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (2014)

Paragraph 003 of the 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' section of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) describes conservation as:

> *"an active process of maintenance and managing change.[17]"*

It also confirms the following:

> *"In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. Where changes are proposed, it is confirmed that the NPPF sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-taking to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where*

[17] DCLG (2014) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) - Paragraph 003 Reference ID: 18a-003-20140306

appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development."[18]

In advising on how proposals can avoid or minimise harm to the significance of a heritage asset, it is confirmed that the clear understanding of the significance of a heritage asset and its setting is necessary to develop proposals which avoid or minimise harm.

The PPG also advises on what constitutes a viable use for a heritage asset. It states the following:

"The vast majority of heritage assets are in private hands. Thus, sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation…..

It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also the future conservation of the asset. It is obviously desirable to avoid successive harmful changes carried out in the interests of repeated speculative and failed uses.

If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If there is a range of alternative viable uses, the optimum use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes.

The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most profitable one. It might be the original use, but that may no longer be economically viable or even the most compatible with the long-term conservation of the asset. However, if from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner.

Harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused provided the harm is minimised."[19]

The PPG confirms that a clear understanding of the significance of a heritage asset is necessary to develop proposals which avoid or minimise harm. Early appraisals, a conservation plan or targeted specialist investigation can help to identify constraints and opportunities arising from the asset at an early stage. Such studies can reveal alternative development options, for example more sensitive designs or different orientations, that will deliver public benefits in a more sustainable and appropriate way.

It states that public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 7). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.

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[18] DCLG (2014) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) - Paragraph 003 Reference ID: 18a-003-20140306

[19] DCLG (2014) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) - Paragraph 016 Reference ID: 18a-016-20140306

Public benefits may include heritage benefits, such as:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.

Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment

Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (2015)

The guidance stresses the importance of being able to properly asses the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset early in the process. It also endorses understanding the nature of significance, the extent of that significance and the level of significance.

It confirms that change to heritage assets is inevitable but it is only harmful when significance is damaged. The nature and importance of the significance that is affected will dictate the proportionate response to assessing that change, its justification, mitigation and any recording that may be needed if it is to go ahead.

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